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# PRAYER

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# PERSONAL PRAYER

ITS NATURE AND SCOPE

With

ILLUSTRATIVE ANSWERS TO PRAYER

By

H. CLAY TRUMBULL

Long Library.



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## Preface

These thoughts about prayer are not mainly devotional, nor are they designed chiefly for the encouragement of those who already have rest in their enjoyment of prayer. They were written primarily for the meeting of difficulties which trouble many minds with reference to the true basis of prayer, its scope, and its limitations.

They are to point out to doubters the reasons for and the reasonableness of fitting prayer, and to suggest caution and warning as to the mode and matter of prayer, rather than to urge to a continuance of a practice already appreciated by spiritually minded believers. Many of these thoughts have been brought out in hours of earnest discussion with inquiring or anxious minds, at various places and at widely different times.

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## Preface

Because they were first expressed to those who were in trouble of mind, and proved serviceable in making clear the principles involved, it is hoped that they may be helpful to many others whom the writer has never met.

H. C. T.

PHILADELPHIA,  
*February 25, 1896.*

## Contents

I	PAGE
WHAT IS PRAYER? . . . . .	I
II	
UNIVERSALITY OF THE PRAYER-CRY . . . . .	7
III	
PRAYER A PROVIDENTIAL FORCE IN GOD'S PLAN . . . . .	13
IV	
WHAT TO PRAY FOR, AND WHY . . . . .	19
V	
LIMITATIONS OF THE RIGHT OF PRAYER . .	31
VI	
PRAYING IN THE NAME OF JESUS . . . . .	43
VII	
PRAYER IN FAITH BETTER THAN FAITH IN PRAYER . . . . .	53
VIII	
MISTAKING PRESUMPTION FOR FAITH . . . .	69

## Contents

IX

	PAGE
PRAYING FOR OTHERS . . . . .	81

X

LEADING OTHERS IN PRAYER . . . . .	91
------------------------------------	----

XI

HELPING ANOTHER IN PRAYER . . . . .	113
-------------------------------------	-----

XII

PRAYING TO GOD AS A FRIEND . . . . .	121
--------------------------------------	-----

XIII

GETTING COMFORT BY PRAYER . . . . .	129
-------------------------------------	-----

XIV

PERILS OF PRAYER . . . . .	137
----------------------------	-----

XV

PRAYING AT OTHERS . . . . .	145
-----------------------------	-----

XVI

LOSS THROUGH UNOFFERED PRAYERS . . .	153
--------------------------------------	-----

# I

## What is Prayer?

Many who are in the habit of praying have but vague notions of the meaning of the term "prayer;" and many more of those who sneer at or undervalue prayer do not know what it is that they are making light of. Whether prayer be indulged in or ignored, it were well to be able at least to answer the question, What is prayer?

A common thought of prayer connects it with direct petition, with a call for relief or help of some kind. It is used in this sense in legal phrase. A petitioner to a court of justice, to a legislative body, or to a ruler, usually closes his formal request with the words, "And your petitioner as in duty bound will ever pray." The same idea has prominence in the minds of most of those who pray morning and evening to God, as the giver of all good. They

## Prayer

ask of God those things which they want, or which they think they need.

Prayer, in even this limited sense, may be for others as well as for one's self. A legal petition to those in authority, or a call for relief or help from God, may include the friends of the petitioner or others in whom he has an interest. But the idea of supplication and of intercession generally limits the thought of prayer. Yet prayer means a great deal more than this, all the world over.

In the Hebrew of the Old Testament, and in the Greek of the New, there are quite a number of different words translated, in our English Bible, by the one term "prayer." The meanings of these words severally are, therefore, all included in the Bible idea of prayer. These meanings are: confession, supplication, entreaty, desire, intercession, thanksgiving, adoration, praise, worship, meditation, outpouring of self, communion; and unless prayer is recognized as covering all these signifi-

## What is Prayer?

cations, it falls short of what is fairly within the limits of its fullest sense.

Prayer to God presupposes the fact of God as a hearer and answerer of prayer, in such relations with or in such attitude toward the one who prays, as to justify the privilege of prayer. One would have little encouragement to make a personal request of God, unless he felt that God would be entreated by him as a petitioner. Hence prayer, as mere supplication or intercession, involves an understood relation between him who prays and Him who is prayed to, that carries with it well-known privileges and duties. A man cannot even ask help of God unless he has hope that God will hear and heed him because God is God, and because the petitioner stands as he stands before God; for a cry of despair is not in the spirit of prayer.

Prayer as prayer carries with it the duty of praise as praise. He who comes to God with requests that he expects to have answered, ought to be grateful that he can

## Prayer

come thus hopefully; and he will naturally give expression to his thankfulness in hearty ascriptions of praise. Asking a favor of one who can give, includes an obligation, and so a virtual promise, to return thanks if the favor be granted. "Think" and "thank" are radically the same word, and he who fails to thank God for his good gifts fails to think duly of God as their giver. So again "praising" is but another word for "appraising," and he who does not come to God in prayer, with praise for the privilege of praying, fails of showing a right estimate and appreciation of prayer.

When ten lepers came to Jesus with a common petition for their healing, Jesus healed them all; but he was grieved, for their sakes, that only one of them showed his right appraisal of his cure, by returning to give praise for its granting. And the one whose prayer was thus accompanied with praise had a blessing that was not secured to the other nine. Do one in ten of those who now make requests for

## What is Prayer?

the day, in their morning prayer, preface those requests with praise that they can thus come to God, or do they return to give thanks in the evening for every specific answer to the petitions of the morning? There can be no spirit of true prayer without the spirit of praise accompanying it.

All of the many phases of true prayer are included in the one idea of communing with God. There can be no proper prayer without such communing, or a desire for it. Where such communing exists, or is longed for, confession, supplication, intercession, adoration, meditation, outpouring of self, thanksgiving, and praise, commingle unconsciously. Thus it is that men can "pray without ceasing" and "pray everywhere." And thus it is that God can hear prayer, when no one on earth can hear it.

"I need not leave the jostling world,  
Or wait till daily tasks are o'er,  
To fold my palms in secret prayer  
Within the close-shut closet door.

## Prayer

"There is a viewless, cloistered room,  
As high as heaven, as fair as day,  
Where, though my feet may join the throng,  
My soul can enter in and pray.

"And never through those crystal walls  
The clash of life can pierce its way,  
Nor ever can a human ear  
Drink in the spirit-words I say.

"One hearkening, even, cannot know  
When I have crossed the threshold o'er;  
For He alone, who hears my prayer,  
Has heard the shutting of the door."

## II

### **Universality of the Prayer-Cry**

"O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." This is the declaration of the inspired Psalmist, and the widest acquaintance with human nature and with human experiences confirms the truth of the declaration. Man prays because man is man, and needs help from One who is above man and outside of man. The universality of the human prayer-cry is a result and a proof of the need and the fitness of prayer by man to God.

Those who profess to be able to show, by a study of the form and the powers of living organisms, the process by which man has arrived at his present state, tell us that an existing need tends to produce a corresponding effort and an ultimate capacity to meet that need. Light calls for sight. If there were no light, there would be no

## Prayer

eye to perceive the light. But wherever there is light, life seeks and secures the power to perceive and utilize light. It is in accordance with the principle here suggested that the existence of a Hearer of prayer is in itself an invitation and an incitement to the universal prayer-cry of humanity.

Prayer is not a consequence of any specific command to pray. The duty of prayer is not even included in the scope of the Ten Commandments—or the Ten Words of God's loving covenant with his people. There is no primitive injunction to prayer in the earlier pages of the Bible history of the race. The fact, like the fitness and the necessity, of prayer, seems to be taken for granted in Bible teachings, as truly as the existence of God and the dependence of man on God. A cry to God for help in some crisis hour of need or sorrow is instinctive in the human heart, and must be so while man is man and God is God.

## Universality of the Prayer-Cry

Men may repress their impulse to pray in ordinary times, or may neglect and ignore the duty and privilege of prayer, while they are free from any sense of peril, or are thoughtless as to their utter dependence on supernatural aid and guidance; but the time will come when they realize that they are not sufficient unto themselves, and then, in spite of themselves, the prayer-cry is forced out of their heart of hearts. "He that will learn to pray, let him go to sea," says George Herbert pithily, out of the wisdom of the ages; and many a man has uttered his first conscious prayer-cry in some hour of extremity in an ocean storm, or as he faced death on a battle-field.

"Do you ever pray, my friend?" asked an army chaplain of a wounded soldier in the prison hospital in Charleston, in our Civil War, just after the fierce and fruitless assault on Fort Wagner. "Sometimes, chaplain," was the answer; "I prayed last Saturday night, when we were in that fight

## Prayer

at Wagner. I guess everybody prayed *then*." Yes, everybody prays at one time or another, in faith or in fear, in hope or in despair.

"There is no God," the foolish saith ;—  
But none, 'There is no sorrow !'  
And nature oft the cry of faith  
In bitter need will borrow.  
Eyes which the preacher could not school  
By wayside graves are raised,  
And lips say, 'God be pitiful !'  
Who ne'er said, 'God be praised !'  
Be pitiful, O God ! "

In the presence of the dread realities of the unknown future, the soul's cry for spiritual help is instinctive and universal. At its least, it is like the unconscious cry of the new-born babe for the food of nature provided of God in the mother-life ; or like the unspoken cry of the parched lips, in the delirium of fever, for the cool water which the wandering intellect cannot give words to ask for. Because their human needs require superhuman help, and superhuman help is divinely provided for them, there-

## Universality of the Prayer-Cry

fore their souls cry for such assistance. The God-given supply prompts the man-felt longing.

Those who are outside of the influence of Bible teachings or of Christian associations give utterance to cries for super-human aid in their hour of need. They call on the gods to help them, or they cry to the demons to spare them from harm. The prayer-cry of the human heart is universal. He who refuses to pray, sins against the light of revelation and of nature. He wrongs his own soul as surely as if he were to refuse to smile in the hour of joy, or to shed a tear when he is in sorrow.

"He who goes to bed and doth not pray,  
Maketh two nights of ev'ry day."

Whatever one may think of the reasons for prayer, or of the reasonableness of the universal heart-cry for supernatural help, he must admit that this cry is natural to man, and that therefore there is some good reason for it. If he represses his impulse at times to share in it, he bears himself

## **Prayer**

unnaturally, and he is less than a man if he lives a prayerless life. It is a shame to man to lead a prayerless life.

"For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?  
For so the whole round world is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

### III

## Prayer a Providential Force in God's Plan

It is according to the promise of God, and therefore it is in accordance with the "laws of nature," that great wonders can be wrought through prayer. God has so planned his work of creation that right prayer is as potent a force in the universe as the mightiest of mere natural forces.

There can be no conflict where God has ordained harmony. All agencies which God has put in operation work together for good to them that love him. His kingdoms of nature and of grace are not at variance. The progress of the one kingdom is no hindrance to the progress of the other; on the contrary, each is by God set to help forward the other to its best and completest work. Unless the prayer of faith comes in for its provided mission, all

## Prayer

the forces of nature fail of their most beneficent accomplishment, just as surely as the electric current waits aimlessly for the magnetic battery and the telegraphic wire to enable it to bear a message of affection or warning from one Christian believer's home to another.

The confusion in many a man's mind over this matter of prayer arises from ignoring the fact that God so arranged all the workings of nature, so planned and fixed its "laws," that the needs and the longings of all his children in all the ages should be met by the influence of prayer in nature's operations. Concerning the miracle of the overthrow of Pharaoh's host, the speculative rabbis concluded that when the Lord originally formed the Red Sea he so contrived it that its waters should separate when the rod of his servant Moses was first stretched above them, and that they should fall back again when that rod was over them a second time. Theirs certainly was a great deal better

## A Providential Force

logic, and theirs a more sensible conclusion, than is the notion of some modern theorists, that the "laws of nature" are so constraining and inexorable that they bind Omnipotence; that they render God unable to do as he would like to, and unwilling to do as he has promised.

Electricity and gravitation are recognized as forces controlled by the "laws of nature." Yet man has unmistakable power to will and plan and execute a change in the operation and application of these forces by means of simple mechanical agencies, so that gravitation is practically overcome and suspended, or resumed and intensified, for a special purpose within given limits of time and space; and electricity is drawn out of its normal course in the heavens and made to travel a wire stretched from one point to another to enable two persons at a distance from each other to converse on matters of merely personal interest. This is admitted by those who deem it unreasonable to suppose

## Prayer

that a loving personal God can and does change and direct the application of the forces of nature at the need and call of those whom God loves. They seem, indeed, unwilling to concede to God the power over the forces of nature that is exercised in a thousand cases by the humblest tender of a pile-driver or the poorest trained telephone girl.

God's promise is explicit and often repeated that the faith-filled prayer of the disciples of Jesus shall be answered. If that promise is not to be depended on, God cannot be trusted. If God can be believed, that promise is sure. To the child of God, his Father and his Father's promises are inseparable. They must be accepted or rejected together. When God says that we may have a thing *if* we pray for it in faith, God's promise of giving that thing is conditioned on our faith-filled prayers for it. We know, therefore, just how that thing is to be obtained. If we fail to meet the conditions of its bestowal,

## A Providential Force

we must make up our minds to do without its benefits.

When there is no asking for that which is to come by the asking, there is no receiving of that thing. The "laws of nature" are no hindrance to God's giving of whatever his children need and in faith pray for. But his children's failure to pray for a blessing which he has conditioned on their prayer, does hinder his giving to them. God *can* be depended on,—depended on to keep his promise of an answer to the faith-filled prayer of his children, even though ten thousand miracles were needed to that answer,—depended on, also, to withhold those good gifts which he has promised to bestow on his children only in answer to their prayer of faith.

There are rich gifts awaiting the right-ful prayers of the disciples of Jesus,—gifts that are to be had for the asking, and not to be had unless they are asked for. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and

## Prayer

find grace to help in time of need"—mercy and grace for ourselves and for others. God stands waiting to answer such prayers on our part. Let us fail of no blessing at his hands that is conditioned on our request for it. As sure as is our confidence in his existence may be our confidence in his fidelity to his promises. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

## IV

### **What to Pray for, and Why**

God has disclosed himself in the Bible as the Father of the children of men, and men are invited to love him, to trust him, and to call upon him, as true children would love and trust and call upon an earthly father. This relation of father and child, therefore, suggests and defines the relation of God and men; and the scope and the nature of prayer are indicated in their reach and in their limitations by this simple and intelligible figure.

Whatever an earthly child might ask of an earthly father, a spiritual child of God may ask of his heavenly Father; and in the spirit that is proper in an earthly child approaching his earthly father, a spiritual child of God may properly approach his heavenly Father. It is right for a child to be reverent, to be trustful, to be loving,

## Prayer

as he comes to his father. It is right for a child to tell his father freely of his needs, of his wants, and of his wishes. It is right for a child to feel that his father knows better than he does whether his requests should be granted or denied; and he should accept cheerfully and with gratitude his father's decision in every case. This is as true in the case of a child of God coming to his heavenly Father, as of a child of man coming to his earthly father.

But it is said that God is omniscient as well as loving, and that because he knows every want of every child of his, as a human father cannot know every want of his child, it were needless, or presumptuous, for a child of God to make specific request of God for a personal gift to himself as though it would not be given except for that request. How can we feel justified in coming with a special request to God for personal ministry to us, individually, as though we were forgotten or overlooked of God; or as though he could be expected

## What to Pray for, and Why

to change his plans, or modify his laws, in our behalf? It is sufficient for us on this point to know that God asks us, as his children, to make known our personal wants to him, and to ask of him those things which, as his loving children, we desire from him; and that he distinctly assures us that he will be influenced and affected in his ministry to us by our calls upon him.

"Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee," is the invitation and the promise of the Old Testament, many times repeated. In the New Testament the Son of God and the Son of man, while explicitly saying to his disciples, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him," at the same time gives to them a pattern of prayer, including special petitions for both spiritual and material gifts which God knows they require, yet which he seems to condition on their request for them. Again and again Jesus Christ says, in substance, to his disciples, "All things

## Prayer

whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive;" or, "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them." These promises, with all their wide scope, are limited by their very phrasing to God's children as God's children, and to those things which a child of God can ask of God in faith; but within those limitations they are explicit and positive.

There are Christians whose philosophy of prayer would limit its advantages to its subjective influence on, or in, the one who prays, and who think that it cannot result in any change of God's action toward the petitioner, although it does result in an improved state of thought and feeling on the part of one thus seeking communion with God. But this view is at variance with the plain teachings of the Bible, and with the explicit declarations of God himself. God says he will be influenced by prayer. He says that the prayer of faith shall result in special objective advantages

## **What to Pray for, and Why**

to the one who prays, and to those who are prayed for in faith. A child of God ought to expect answers to prayer, and he fails in his plain duty if he does not rest on God's promise to this extent.

When the Syrophenician woman prayed to Jesus for the recovery of her demon-possessed daughter, and he seemed not ready to grant her request, she continued persistently in prayer, not in order to bring her mind into mere submission to his will, but in order to bring him to grant recovery to her tormented child. It was an objective, not a subjective, result that she was after; and Jesus commended her spirit in this, and granted her request. This is also the way of God with reference to prayer, as taught us in the Old Testament and in the New.

Other Christians would make a distinction between spiritual gifts and material gifts which is not made in the Bible, and which is not in accordance with God's fatherly dealings with his children. It is

## Prayer

said, by some, that it is right to pray for spiritual gifts and graces, but that it is not right to pray for food, or for clothing, or for health, or for personal safety in time of danger. But all these things are important in their way to a child of God; and a child of God has a right to make known his wants in any and every sphere, in loving trust and in submissiveness to his heavenly Father's will.

Jesus Christ rebuked this distinction between things spiritual and things material, when he asked the Jewish scribes, who stood watching him as the man sick of the palsy was brought into his presence for his healing: "Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven ; or to say, Arise, and walk?" and then he both forgave the sins of the palsied one, and restored him to physical health. In those days, men were readier to believe that bodily strength could be given by Jesus Christ, than that he had power to bestow spiritual wholeness. Nowadays, Christians seem readier

## What to Pray for, and Why

to believe that prayers in the name of Christ for spiritual gifts will be answered, than that prayers in behalf of the body and its necessities will meet with an answer from God. Both errors are alike displeasing to God.

Many of the miracles of our Saviour were wrought in behalf of the bodily needs of those who prayed to him. In his pattern prayer, he frames a petition for a daily supply of things needful to the body of the one who prays. In foretelling the dark days which should come to his disciples in the destruction of Jerusalem, he enjoined them to include time and weather in their prayers with reference to it. "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on a sabbath," he said; and who supposes that Jesus meant in this that such prayer could make no difference in the result?

As to God's way with his children in this matter, Jesus said: "What man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for

## Prayer

a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

We have reason to infer that the thrice-repeated prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane was for special physical strength, lest his worn body should fail him in the struggle that was yet before him, and he should die of exhaustion before coming to the cross; for we are told in the letter to the Hebrews that his prayer was heard in that thing which was a cause of fear to him. And the record is, that an angel was sent to minister to him; and he had new strength from that hour to the end. Physical strength was a necessity to Jesus while here in the flesh, as it is also a necessity to every child of God who still has a work to do in the flesh; and prayer for physical strength for the doing of one's appointed work is right and fitting, on the part of each and every child of God.

## **What to Pray for, and Why**

Of course a child of God is to consider his body only in its proper place, in and for the service of God. He is to ask only for that supply to his body which shall enable him to serve God more efficiently, and where and as God pleases; and he is to ask in submissiveness to God's will, assured that God's answer will be according to God's wisdom and love, whether it be in compliance with the petition, or in denial of it.

When Paul prayed three times over for the removal of the stake in his flesh, he was assured that God would do better by him than to grant that request; he would give him added strength to bear up under it; and thenceforward Paul was ready to rejoice in his physical infirmity as a means of spiritual power. This should be the way of every child of God in his praying for blessings from God in the physical realm.

All prayer should be without anxiety or fearfulness. Jesus cautioned his disciples

## Prayer

not to be worried over their material wants ; but he did not tell them to refrain from asking for a daily supply according to their daily needs, in this realm. When his disciples cried out to him for help in their hour of danger on the sea, Jesus rebuked them for their lack of faith, not as shown in their call upon him for protection, but as indicated in their expressed doubt of his readiness to give them rescue and safety.

Jesus, while here in the flesh, showed by his works that he had power over material things, over disease, over death, over the forces of nature, and over spiritual forces. He fed the hungry, he healed the sick, he prolonged life, he raised the dead, he calmed the winds and waves, he cast out demons, he forgave sins. Before he went away he said to his disciples : "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do ; because I go unto the Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in

## What to Pray for, and Why

my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask me anything in my name, that will I do." Is it not strange that, in the face of the example and the declaration of our Lord at this point, any one of his disciples should venture to say that a follower of his is not authorized to ask in Christ's name for food, or health, or safety to the body, or for the calming of a storm, as well as for spiritual blessings?

A prayer of a true child of God, offered in faith, will be for such things only as the child supposes he needs and has a right to ask for, in order to his filling his place and doing his work in life to better advantage. And every such prayer will of necessity be conditioned on God's knowledge that the thing asked for is best for the petitioner. Thus offered, every such prayer, whether it be for things in the realm of matter or of spirit, will be approved of God, and will be answered accordingly. God's word is pledged to this.

## Prayer

Whatever a child of God needs—not merely wants, but needs—a child of God is authorized to ask for. Whatever a child of God asks for in faith, within the limits of his needs, God stands ready to supply. The responsibility of asking is laid on the child of God. The responsibility of deciding whether the thing asked for is really needed rests with God.

## V

### **Limitations of the Right of Prayer**

One of the puzzling questions in the minds of many Bible-believers grows out of the apparent positiveness of the Bible in promises of answer to prayer, and of the seeming uncertainty of answers to prayer in the experiences of those who pray.

On the one hand, the invitations and the promises seem to them explicit and unqualified: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee;" "Ask, and it shall be given you;" "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive;" "If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name;" "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." On the other hand, they know of many calls on God which have not been an-

## Prayer

swered, and of prayers innumerable which have received no response. And because of this lack of fulfilment of Bible promises, they stand bewildered.

It does not meet the case to say that God often answers prayer by giving something that is as good as that which was asked for, but which is very different from the thing requested. The promise appears to leave the choice to the petitioner; therefore, to deny him his choice does not seem consistent with either the letter or the spirit of the promise.

As the promises are made to plain people, it is fair to suppose that the meaning of those promises is on the face of them; and since their form is apparently an unqualified one, the expectation of an explicit and specific answer to them would seem to be fully justified. In view, therefore, of the apparent irreconcilableness of the specific promises of answer to prayer, and the obvious facts concerning prayer and its answers, many a child of God is

## **Limitations of the Right of Prayer**

wondering how this state of things is to be accounted for. "I can give no light on the subject," said a distinguished theologian, who was asked his opinion on this vexed subject. "The unanswered prayers of Christians are a mystery to me." And he spoke for many Christians, so far.

Yet there is no sound reason for perplexity on this point. There is, in fact, no such discrepancy between the answers to prayer promised and the answers to prayer received, in the experiences of Christians, as there might seem to be by the ordinary mode of stating the case. Both the invitations and the promises to prayer which seem so unqualified have in their very nature important qualifications which a plain man can recognize and appreciate; and within the limits of these qualifications the answers to prayer are assured to all who pray accordingly. The trouble with those who are bewildered on this point is, that they fail to bear in mind the essential limitations of the right of

## Prayer

prayer, which they will have to admit are to be found in it. And so far the trouble is of their own making.

Does any one believe that the promises of an answer to prayer are to the open enemies of God, assuring to those enemies the power to overthrow God's rule, or to thwart his purposes of love to his creatures? If not, then here is an essential limitation to the right of prayer, to begin with,—a limitation which a plain man can perceive and comprehend. The promises which in the Bible are made to "you" are clearly made to God's children as his children, or to the disciples of Jesus as his disciples. They are not to everybody, regardless of the attitude of the petitioner toward God.

Even to a disciple of Jesus, can it be supposed that the promise is an unqualified one of harm to any one against whom he may pray, or of help to him in carrying out his intentions of evil? If not, then here is another limitation to the right of

## **Limitations of the Right of Prayer**

prayer, even though the invitation to pray should seem an unqualified one as it stands in the Bible text. The right of prayer is obviously limited to those who turn toward God as his creatures, and to the asking of such gifts as God is understood to be willing to bestow. No one has a right, under any Bible invitation, to pray for that which is contrary to the loving nature and to the known will of God. A plain man can perceive this as clearly as a theologian.

Any promise from one person to another, or any compact between two persons, is to be interpreted in the light of the well-understood relations of those persons to one another. Take an illustration, for example, from army service in time of active warfare. A corps commander directs a colonel to take his regiment to a critical position and perform a specified duty. As he sends him out, he says, "Call on me for whatever you want, and you shall have it promptly." Hardly is the colonel at his post before he sends back a request to

## Prayer

the commander for the suspension of all hostilities along the entire line—even, if necessary, at the cost of surrender—so that the new movement can be made without any danger to the life and limb of those engaged in it. The request is refused.

“But didn’t you promise to give me whatever I wanted, if I would ask for it?” says the colonel. “Certainly I did,” replies the commander; “but that promise had reference to you as a soldier, under authority, in time of warfare. You knew that you were liable to death on the battle-line. You knew that I must keep up active movements elsewhere along the front.” “Well, then,” says the colonel, “I don’t see that your promise amounts to anything, if you are to grant only such requests as you think it wise to grant. I thought the promise was unqualified; but it seems now to be so limited that all there is to it is a privilege of asking without knowing whether an answer will be given or not.”

“The promise *was* unqualified within

## **Limitations of the Right of Prayer**

its well-understood limits, as between a commander and his subordinate," is the commander's answer. "If you had asked for forty rounds of ammunition per man, or for three days' rations, or for a supply of shovels and picks, or for a covering party on either flank, or for an explanation of your orders on a doubtful point, you might have been as sure of an answer as of the sun in the heavens. The promise was unqualified just so far as you had any real needs; just so far as you might properly want because of your need; just so far as you had a right to make a requisition in the line of your designated service. So far the answer was assured you.

"And even beyond all that, you might have *asked* for a cessation of hostilities, in order that you might work to better advantage; but as you could not know if *that* were practicable and wise from the commander's standpoint of knowledge, you would have to leave it to him to say whether or not he would accede to that

## Prayer

request. Within your own sphere of need and knowledge the promise of help had no limits. Outside of that it must, in the very nature of things, be conditioned on the commander's judgment."

In such a case as this, would the difficulty be in the wording of the commander's promise, or in the unreasonableness of the subordinate's rendering of it? The promise was all that it ought to have been, and no more. Its scope and its limitations were plain enough to any fair-minded hearer. As in soldier life, so in the life of the disciple of Jesus.

The scope and the limitations of one's personal responsibility in God's service, define the extent to which one can confidently claim an answer to prayers for help in that sphere. Where God has given one of his children a specific mission and duty, God is pledged to impart power for the performance of that duty and mission. As children of God and as members of Christ we are workers together with God

## **Limitations of the Right of Prayer**

for the establishing of Christ's kingdom on earth, and we should pray and strive to that end, believing that our efforts and prayers are a force in God's plan for bringing it to pass.

Yet we cannot claim an answer to our specific request for the evangelization of a dark continent, or for the turning to Christ of a soul for which we have no direct personal responsibility, as we can in a case where God has committed a soul to our personal care. When God has given to us a child, a pupil, a servant, or any other needy soul, that rests on our heart as a burden that we cannot upbear alone, we can bring that burden to him in undoubting faith, saying, "Here am I, Lord, and the one whom thou hast given me; if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." The answer to such a prayer will surely be, "If thou canst believe [for this child as for thyself]; all things are possible to him that believeth."

God has already disclosed to us his will

## Prayer

on many a point where we have the duty and the privilege of special prayer. God has made it clear that he does not want us to yield to temptation; hence, when we are tempted, we can ask, nothing doubting, for strength of resistance. God has promised wisdom in any emergency to those who need and seek it, if they will come to him with unwavering faith. In every such case we can ask accordingly, without limitation or reservation.

So, again, in all our requests for help in doing any duty to which God has assigned us, or for the power to be faithful to any trust committed to our charge, or for the ability to represent God aright in any sphere where we stand as his representatives. To the extent of our knowledge of God's will for us, or for those over whom he sets us, or to whom he sends us, we have a right to pray without qualification, and to expect in all confidence a specific answer to our prayers.

On the other hand, God has not made

## **Limitations of the Right of Prayer**

it clear to us that it is best for us or for our dear ones to retain unimpaired health, or to be spared from death, or to have success in business, or to win honors, or to retain a friendship, or to be shielded from disgrace, or to labor on in our present field of endeavor, or to receive any one of a hundred longings of our heart in the direction of things that are not explicitly forbidden of God, yet that are not made known to us by him as sure to be for the welfare of all who desire them. For no one of these things have we a right to pray without qualification. Not knowing whether their bestowal would be a benefit or an injury, it is our duty to leave it to God to give or to withhold as he sees to be best.

In the very nature of things, it is clear that no child of God has a right to pray for that which he has no right to desire; and that he has no right to desire that which is not for his good, or for the good of those for whom he prays. Hence it is clear that a child of God has a right

## Prayer

to pray unqualifiedly only for those things which he knows to be for good; while for those things which he thinks may be for good, but about which he cannot be sure, he is privileged to pray with the qualification in his prayer that God will grant them if they are for good, and withhold them if they are not so.

Prayer is a privilege, and prayer is a power. But the right of prayer has its essential limitations; and he who asks for that which he has no right to ask, or who asks unqualifiedly for that which he ought to leave it with God to bestow or to withhold, fails to bring his prayer within the scope of these essential limitations; and there is no promise of an answer to his prayer. God's promises of answer to prayer never fail of their fulfilling; but man's hope of answers to his prayer beyond the promises of God are always liable to disappointment.

## VI

### Praying in the Name of Jesus

Jesus says over and over again to his disciples, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do;" "If ye shall ask me anything in my name, that will I do;" "If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name;" "In that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father." "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: [now] ask, and ye shall receive."

What does all this mean? What is it to ask in the name of Jesus? Is it, as many Christians seem to believe, to conclude a prayer with the set formula, "All which we ask in the name of Jesus"? Or is it something more than this?

## Prayer

The “name” in primitive thought stands for the person bearing that name; it is, in a sense, the person himself; while in our modern and Western thought a “name” is often little more than a label attached to a person, in order to distinguish him from other persons. To know another’s name, to have a right to bear that name, to speak and act in that name, is, in primitive thought, to be a sharer of that person’s life,—by birth, by marriage, or by covenant adoption,—and so to be, in a peculiar sense, a representative of that person.

A son bearing his father’s name stands for that father, and rightly expects to be received with the respect due to his father. A member of a family or of a tribe is recognized as worthy of the position and honor due to that tribe or family. A soldier, or a servant, coming with a message from his master, does not stand merely on his personal worth, but on the worth and power of him whom he represents. Hence to ask, or to come, in the name of another,

## **Praying in the Name of Jesus**

is, as an Oriental would understand it, and as the Bible would state it, to be a representative of the one whose name is thus borne.

When the high-priest of Israel went before the Lord, as the representative of the twelve tribes of Israel, to ask mercy and grace in their behalf, he bore upon his breast, above his heart, a breastplate in which were set four rows of precious stones; "and the stones were according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names; like the engravings of a signet, every one according to his name, for the twelve tribes." And the command for Aaron, as the high-priest, was: "Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually."

It was not necessary that Aaron should call over, audibly, the names of every one of the twelve tribes, every time he entered

## Prayer

the holy place, in order to come into the presence of the Lord as the representative of those tribes each and all. He was their representative. Their names were in his heart, and their symbols or tokens were over his heart, and for their sakes and in their names he came and pleaded, and made offerings, according to their needs.

Similarly, to-day, an officer might come into the presence of an army commander, bearing upon his shoulders the straps of his rank, and upon his breast the insignia of his corps and his division, and ask a favor or an order, in the name of his immediate command, and by his very position be recognized and received as the representative of that command. Or, an American abroad, standing under the folds of the United States flag, might be as truly and as specifically received as an American, and given honor as a representative of that republic, as if he were to call over in their order the forty-five names of the states of the Union as the component divisions of

## Praying in the Name of Jesus

the nationality to which he owned allegiance and from which he claimed protection. It is the being a representative of that which a name represents, and not the calling out of the name itself, that constitutes coming and asking, in any name.

The "name," in Oriental thought, is even more than the person bearing it. It, in a sense, covers and encloses the person. It wraps itself about him as a garment or as a flag, and shields and protects his personality. He who gives his name to another, or who authorizes another to be and to go in his name, adds himself as an outer covering to that other's self, and thereby does for that other all that could be done by either personality, or by both. Thus, "the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

When David the stripling shepherd, without any outside armor, stood before the giant Goliath who "had an helmet of brass upon his head," and "was clad with

## Prayer

a coat of mail," the weight of which "was five thousand shekels of brass," having "greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders," and his weapons were a sword, a spear, and a javelin, David faced him confidently, saying: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a javelin: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts [enclosed as in a tower in the name of the Lord], the God of the armies of Israel, which thou hast defied." David in that strong tower was safe, as Goliath was not, in his armor.

To "take the name of the Lord" is to assume that name, to claim it as one's own, to bear it as if one had a right to it as his family or personal name. It was the custom of the sovereigns and leaders of primitive peoples to incorporate the names of their gods with their own names, and thus to take or carry those names as their protection and authority wherever they went. Thus Bel, Sin, Nebo, Assur, as Babyl-

## Praying in the Name of Jesus

nian and Assyrian gods, were found in Belshazzar, Sennacherib, Nebuchadrezzar, Assurbanapal ; Set and Ra, gods of Egypt, were found in Sety and Rameses. Similarly the name of Jehovah, Jahu, or Jah, was found in Joshua, Jeroboam, and Jeremiah. Bearing these names, such men went in the name of their gods, or of God the Lord.

This was coming in the name of the Lord, in the old dispensation. Similarly, in the new dispensation, coming in the name of Jesus the Christ, and asking in his name, is not saying his name over, but it is being enclosed in his name, and representing that which his name represents ; it is coming as *Christians* in sincerity and truth. There were those in the days of the apostles who thought, as many Christians now seem to think, that having power from God was a result of repeating the name of Jesus, as if it were a magical formula.

Persons of this sort "took upon them

## Prayer

to name over them which had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." But being thus adjured, in one instance, "the evil spirit answered and said unto them, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" and harm came not to the evil spirit, but to those who fraudulently assumed and claimed to be in the name of Jesus.

On the other hand, those who had the spirit of Jesus, and were sharers in his nature, lived and acted and spoke and thought in his name, and had acceptance with and power from God continually. And those who were thus in his name were loved for his name, or were hated for his name, by those about them. So it is to-day with all who live in the name of Jesus the Christ.

The Father looks upon those who come to him for a blessing, and sees in their faces, and hears in the tones of their voices, and discerns in the throbings of their

## Praying in the Name of Jesus

hearts, their love for his Son, and their likeness to his Son, and their life in his Son ; and, for the sake of that Son whom they represent, he receives them and ministers unto them to the uttermost extent of their needs and of their heart longings. It is not the figure of the cross which they wear above their hearts "in His name," nor is it the form of words with which they conclude their every prayer "in His name," but it is the proof in their heart of hearts that they are one with their Elder Brother in their lives as children of God, that gives them acceptance with God for the sake of his Son.

It is not our saying, but our showing, that what we ask is asked in the name of Jesus, that God notes and takes into account. It is in this sense that the model prayer, which Jesus gave for our use, is a prayer in the name of its original Framer, although there is in it no verbal mention of his name ; and that many a prayer that has not the name of Jesus in it is more

## Prayer

truly offered up in his name than many another which has his name in it, while it is not offered by one who is in his name.

If we would ask anything in the name of Jesus, we must first be sure that we are ourselves in that name, our life being hid in his life, our name in his name. Then let us be sure that what we ask we want for his sake, and that it is something he would ask for us if he were actually standing in our stead and putting up our petitions for us. Coming thus to the Father, we come in the name, in the spirit, and in the likeness, of his Son; and the Father will hear us, and will answer us, because we are representatives of his Son, enwrapped by and dwelling within his very self as the supreme representative of the Father.

## VII

### Prayer in Faith Better than Faith in Prayer

There is a vast difference between prayer in faith and faith in prayer. Faith in prayer is very common; almost everybody has more or less of it. Prayer in faith is anything but common; so uncommon, in fact, that our Lord questions if he shall find any of it on the earth when he comes back again. Prayer in faith is a commanded duty; faith in prayer is not commanded, nor is it justifiable. Prayer in faith is always reverent and spiritual; faith in prayer is too often superstitious and presuming, although again it is the unconscious reliance of reverent and spiritually minded—but sadly mistaken—Christian disciples.

Praying in faith is making known our requests unto God in full confidence that,

## Prayer

if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us; and that according to our faith an answer to our prayers will be granted us. Having faith in prayer is believing that because certain prayers are offered certain results will follow; that the praying will secure the thing prayed for. Praying in faith comes of an abiding confidence in the Person prayed to: the confidence is in him; it is based on a knowledge of what he is, and on a conviction that he is every way worthy to be trusted. Faith in prayer is a blind, or a presuming, reliance on an agency of good; an unauthorized dependence on mere human means. Praying in faith is the act of a simple-hearted child of God. Faith in prayer is like the reliance of the heathen on their vain repetitions, "who think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

A well-known historical incident in America furnishes a good illustration of the difference between prayer in faith and

A C L U M B U I

## Prayer in Faith

faith in prayer. When, in 1881, President Garfield was stricken down by the hand of an assassin, and lay for a time with his life in the balance, the Christians of the United States joined with a rare degree of unanimity in prayer to God for his recovery. So long as the suffering President lingered on the verge of the grave, it was difficult to say how much of the praying for him was praying in faith, and how much of it was a result of faith in prayer; but when the President was dead, the test of this praying came to every one who had shared in it, or who had watched it curiously.

Those who had had faith in prayer were amazed or bewildered; those who had prayed in faith were neither surprised nor disturbed. "Why, what does all this mean?" asked the former. "Where are God's promises now? If such united, fervent, humble prayer from so many of God's people avails nothing, what can be claimed for the power of prayer at any time, or for any purpose? And what advantage has

## Prayer

the Christian over the scoffing unbeliever in this agency of prayer?"

But those who had prayed in faith were reading this new providence in the light of their faith. Their faith rested in God. God was not dead. They had prayed for some things which they were sure would be in accordance with God's will, and those things had been granted: they had prayed for others of which they were not so sure; and they had asked God to do concerning these things as he deemed best: he had done so. Their every prayer was answered, and they were grateful accordingly. Praying in faith was promoted by this providence in the case of President Garfield; but faith in prayer received a temporary shock.

At the first, in view of the fact that the assassin of the President claimed to be influenced by partisan motives, the nation started in horror at the possible consequences of the crime. Everything for the moment seemed to pivot on that one

## **Prayer in Faith**

precious life. Greed for office was the crying curse of the hour. Partisan animosities were bitter and intense. The popular hope for the triumph of wise counsels and pure purposes over the follies of disappointed ambition and the crimes of government thieves, rested on the President and his immediate advisers.

In case of his death at that time, his successor would not have been judged fairly, nor have been given credit for even striving to do as well as he could. New divisions would have been made between old friends, and old enmities would have intensified. Fresh bickerings and heartburnings would have multiplied on every side. Confidence in our institutions and in the spirit of our people would have been shaken, if not destroyed; and there was more than the possibility of financial and political and moral disaster to our nation. Then it was that the people turned almost as one man to the Lord, and cried earnestly and longingly for help. Then it was

## Prayer

that those who prayed in faith and those who had faith in prayer were at one in supplicating God's forgiveness and loving favor. And those prayers to God were answered.

The precious life was prolonged. Again and again as the sufferer seemed at the point to die, God heard the prayers that were offered for him, and the shadow went back on the dial, in order that the President might linger for the service desired through him. Meantime the things that the Christian believer had a right to ask for, were being secured to the nation by the workings of God's providence. The voice of partisan strife was hushed over that sick-bed. The moral sense of the nation was raised to a higher level in condemnation of struggle for place and of betrayals of public trust. Common sympathy in a common sorrow flooded the barriers of party and of section, and brought men together in love and longing who had before felt that there was nothing in which

## Prayer in Faith

they could agree. Moreover, a sense of dependence on God brought men together before God. The religious sentiment of the nation was aroused and newly disclosed, and all took heart because so many were ready to call upon God in their need.

Meantime the designated successor of the President gained steadily in the sympathy and confidence of the people, and in his own fitness, through the severity of this training for the high responsibilities to which he might, at any hour, be summoned. The dreaded disaster to the nation was averted in answer to faith-filled prayer; and only when the death of the President would cause no such harm to the nation as was imminent at the first, was the President permitted to die.

But it was for the *life* of the President that all these many prayers were offered, and that life was taken away in spite of these prayers! How can this be reconciled with God's promise to answer the united prayers of his children? Just so far as

## Prayer

their country's real interests were involved in that life, were God's children justified in faith-filled prayer for its prolonging. Within those limits they could be sure that God would grant an answer of peace. Outside of that range was beyond their sphere of knowledge or of responsibility. *There* they must trust God to do as he alone could know to be best. While a sore peril of punishment or of disaster was overhanging the country, they had a right to pray in faith that God would avert that disaster; that he would forgive the national sin and turn away a national punishment. All this God did for his people in answer to their faith-filled prayers.

But when it came to the question, whether the further prolonging of the President's life would be a blessing to him, and a blessing to the country, *that* was for God alone to know and decide. Every right-minded child of God who prayed in faith admitted that he did not know as to that point, and that he wanted God to do

## **Prayer in Faith**

what *he* knew to be good. In this, as in the other matters, God answered the faith-filled prayer; for no prayer can be in faith if it does not leave with God the settling of all those points where God alone can know what is best.

When we need wisdom as to our personal duty, or strength for our personal duty; when we need light or guidance or help in the line of our daily life, in material things as well as in things spiritual,—we can pray for it in the full assurance of an answer; for our need just there is unmistakable, and God will never fail to meet the need of one of his children in answer to the faith-filled prayer of that child. But we have no right to say that it is absolutely best for us that another's life shall be spared for our welfare, that we have a positive need of that life. Therefore we have no right to pray for the sparing of such a life,—except as God shall see it to be best for us. We have a right, however, to ask that that life shall be prolonged to us until

## Prayer

its taking away shall not be to our real and permanent injury, nor to the injury of its possessor, and God will hear and answer such asking. If he takes that life immediately after such a prayer, we may be sure that it was better for all that that life should go just then.

"But," said many, "the 'prayer-test' has failed. Here was a grand opportunity for God to show the power of prayer; and the opportunity has been lost. Now, this will give tremendous vantage-ground to scoffers, and a great many who believed in prayer before will never believe in it again." And do you suppose that God made any mistake just there? Was his cause any less dear to himself than to you? or was he any less familiar with its needs? No, no! The mistake was not in his failure to work a wonder at that time in proof of his power; but it was in men's idea that a new wonder by him at any time would create faith in him, or bring men to an abiding belief in his power.

## Prayer in Faith

All the wonders of God for Israel, in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the Wilderness, failed to bring as much of faith in God among the Israelites as there is among the people of the United States to-day; and if another similar series of wonders should be wrought in our sight at the present time, they would be no real help to the faith of the believer or to the conviction of the scoffer. It is an old mistake which is repeated continually, that people who will not hear Moses and the Prophets would be persuaded if one rose from the dead, or from the brink of death.

It was well that our unauthorized faith in prayer should be shaken, and that we should come to substitute for it an intelligent faith in God. It was the mistake of scoffing scientists, that they understood the Christian believer to claim an innate power in prayer, and therefore those mistaken scientists asked to have that power put to a scientific test. Prayer is not to be depended on; but God is. Prayer is not

## Prayer

to be tested ; but God is : he invites all who will to put him to the test. Those who hoped for a new argument against the scoffers in the raising up of President Garfield were disappointed. God declined to enter the lists for a local controversy on a question which was the subject of bitter personal dispute.

God's response to any call on him to show by a sign on which side he is in a purely personal discussion comes to-day as it came of old : "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign ; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet." When Jonah prophesied judgment on Nineveh, and the Ninevites cried to God for mercy, God heard and answered their prayer. When the people of the United States seemed threatened with dire punishment in the sudden death of President Garfield, they cried to God for mercy, and God averted the judgment. A new generation had again the sign of the prophet Jonah.

## Prayer in Faith

The form of prayer used to-day by more persons than any other form the world over, is not even understood by millions who employ it. It is a sentence of six syllables in common use among Booddhists. Two of those syllables are mere ejaculations having no direct relation to the other four, and conveying no meaning to their average user. The other four syllables express a mere figure of speech, of which the primitive meaning is lost to the people who employ it.

This Boodhist prayer, "*Om mani padme Hum*," is not only repeated orally by myriads of devotees, but it is multiplied indefinitely by being inscribed on printed scrolls or engraved cylinders, and made to revolve, by water-power or other mechanical agency, as a means of obtaining a blessing for the one who sets the prayer going. It is faith in prayer that causes this praying; but there is no praying in faith by such a formal and mechanical use of an unintelligible formula.

## Prayer

The fatalist Muhammadans believe that praying is in itself both meritorious and potent; and their dervishes give themselves to continued cries on God in prayer hour after hour, in the conviction that so much praying must bring more or less of a blessing. And there is a great deal of this dervish faith in prayer among Christian believers. How often we hear it said of some wild and wayward boy: "Oh! he must be saved; for he is the child of many prayers." "That boy's mother's prayers for him cannot have been in vain. They must be answered." Not the mother's faith is rested on, but the mother's prayers—whether of faith or of doubting agony.

The writer of this, in the days of his army chaplaincy, once pressed the subject of personal religion on a dissolute and reprobate soldier. "Oh! I think more of those things than you suppose, Chaplain," was the quick response. "I've got a praying mother; and I've great faith in her prayers. When I'm in a sharp fight, and

## Prayer in Faith

men are dropping about me, I often feel that my mother's prayers save me. I've great faith in those prayers." And he took another drink of whisky, and died of *delirium tremens* in front of his colonel's tent, without giving any sign of penitence, or of even offering a prayer in faith, with all his sentimental faith in prayer.

Jesus said to his disciples: "Have faith in God"—not Have faith in prayer, but "Have faith in God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it. Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them."

That promise has never failed the disciple of Jesus who prayed in faith; but it has frightfully staggered many a disciple who had faith in prayer. That promise stands as firm to-day as ever. Whatsoever a child

## Prayer

of God has any right to ask for unqualifiedly, he receives just as it is asked for. Whatsoever the child of God ought to leave to the decision of God, he does leave there, in his prayer; and God gives the decision—as the believer asks for it. Faith in God never deceives us; faith in prayer often does—as it ought to.

## VIII

### Mistaking Presumption for Faith

There is no personal duty more positive or more unqualified than the duty of faith. “Have faith in God” is a command as explicit, and of as universal application, as “Thou shalt not steal.” Nor is there any danger of too great a reliance on faith. “The just shall live by his faith;” and no child of God has come to the standard of his full duty and of his full privileges as a child of God, until he can say in all sincerity and heartiness, “That life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me.”

It is both right and safe to have faith in God, for his guidance and help in our every emergency of life, and also in our more ordinary experiences of daily living; in our toilings and in our trials, in our

## Prayer

business and in our recreations, in our health and in our sickness; and for our loved ones as well as for ourselves. We cannot trust God too implicitly. We ought to trust him absolutely and in perfect restfulness.

But while there is no danger of too much faith in God, there is a danger of wrong substitutes for faith. Faith is a well-grounded trust in a trustworthy person; faith in God is a restful trust in the loving and wise and all-powerful God as our Father in heaven, whose word to us is not to be doubted, and whose watchful care of us will never fail.

Faith goes beyond sight, and in its truest exercise it begins where knowledge ends. Faith does not decide for itself what it must have, but it leaves with God the decision of the desired supply, even while it makes known its desire to God. To claim unqualifiedly beyond the limits of knowledge, or to refuse God's proffered help in one line because of a preference for

## **Presumption not Faith**

God's help in another line, is not faith, but presumption; and presumption is very often mistaken for faith.

He who is our Example, as well as our Saviour, gave in his personal experiences illustration and emphasis to this truth that presumption is not faith, and that true faith does not presume. When Jesus struggled with the prince of this world in Gethsemane, he would not choose for himself whether or not he should have relief in his physical needs, but his submissive cry was, again and again, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." An unqualified choice on his part, in that hour, would have been presumption; but he had faith, and did not presume.

When, yet earlier, Jesus was on the pinnacle of the temple at Jerusalem, there were two ways of descent from that lofty height: one was by the human agency of winding stairs; the other was over the parapet, through the empty air, borne up by God-sent angel arms. It was the arch-

## Prayer

enemy of mankind who then and there whispered that faith in God would be shown by rejecting the human agency of the temple stairs, and trusting to the sustaining power of the angels. The very Bible text which would justify this exercise of faith was pointed out by the tempter:

“ He shall give his angels charge concerning thee:  
And on their hands they shall bear thee up,  
Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.”

But Jesus said that to refuse the help of the available stairs would be presumption, and not faith, and that it would be in violation of the command, “Thou shalt not tempt [or improperly put to the test] the Lord thy God”—by multiplying dangers unnecessarily, in order to have an added supply against those dangers. Thus in the example of our Lord, as in all the precepts of the Bible record, the truth stands out that presumption is not faith, and that true faith does not presume.

In many ways the danger of confounding faith with presumption shows itself in

## **Presumption not Faith**

the experiences of poorly instructed or seriously mistaken Christian disciples. To claim the right to expect from God health, or wealth, or honor, or more influence, or more friends, or more appreciation from one's fellows, even though the thing prayed for be desired that it may be used for God's glory and for the welfare of his creatures, is presumption, and not true faith.

Sickness may be a means of greater good than health; poverty, a richer gift than wealth; obscurity, an advantage over prominence; loneliness, a better training than social privileges. God knows as to this. A child of God may properly ask for what seems to him to be preferable in such a matter, but if he does not leave the decision with God, instead of assuming that the best thing, for him or for others, is certain to be just that which the petitioner designates in his prayer, he is presumptuous.

To take the matter of health or sickness as an illustration. It is evident that some

## Prayer

of the richest blessings which God gives to his loved ones are during and by means of sickness; and the delay of healing is often the sign of God's loving providence, and not a token of Satan's control. There are promises of God which can have their fulfilment only in the hours of sickness.

"The Lord will support him upon the couch of languishing :

Thou makest all his bed in his sickness."

How can these be made good if a couch of languishing and a bed of sickness be no place for a child of God in his life-struggle? What presumption it would be to claim that God must lift us instantly from the couch of languishing, and that he ought not to continue us on a bed of sickness!

See how it was in the course of the father of the peculiar people of God under the old dispensation. So long as Jacob stood in ruddy health, he was a scheming supplanter. It was not until he was touched by the finger of God so that he became a cripple for life that he stood erect

## Presumption not Faith

as Israel, a prince of God. Jacob never walked straight until he limped.

When again God would prepare for himself a spiritual father of the outside nations, he fitted Paul for his new work by giving him a stake in the flesh,—“a messenger of Satan” it was, but a messenger which was now set at God’s work, by the will of God,—in order that the infirm apostle might do a better work than a well man could do. And when Paul besought the Lord thrice that he might be of sound body again, he was told explicitly that it was in just such a state as that in which he then found himself that God’s power could be best displayed. And from that day until the present, some of the best work in the Lord’s cause has been done by the sick, and God has been honored and glorified rather by those who were in combat with disease, than by those in the possession of bounding health—free from all physical conflict, and from the benefits which successful conflict brings.

## Prayer

It is true that disease is a consequence of sin, that sickness is in the world because sin is in the world, but it is not true that sickness or bodily infirmity is always a specific result of sinning. Our Lord rebuked that notion among his earlier disciples, as he would also rebuke it among misguided Christians to-day. “Rabbi, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?” was their question to him on one occasion. “Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents [as a cause of this infirmity]: but [this man became blind] that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”

The works of God, in his sustaining grace and in his transforming power, are very often shown in the lives of the blind and the deaf and the bed-ridden, and the patient wrestlers with disease, as those works of God could be shown in no other way; even as, also, the “poor as to the world” are often chosen of God “to be rich in faith,” to the honor of God, and to

## **Presumption not Faith**

the confounding of those who trust in their earthly riches. For men and women in buxom health to claim that they are blessed of God above their sick fellows, mainly because of their fulness of health, is no less presumptuous than it would be for a company of Christian millionaires to parade themselves with labels of their aggregate bank credits, and with the boastful legend, "See whom the Lord loves."

In the struggle with disease, as in the struggle with poverty, God's appointed means are to be used with all wisdom and diligence, and are to be used in faith. To refuse to employ available human means in an hour of human need, and to ask God's help while neglecting them, is in itself presumption. The prompting to refuse these God-provided aids is a temptation of Satan. To yield to such a temptation is more than a culpable weakness ; it is an immorality.

When the Lord would miraculously heal King Hezekiah of his sickness, in response to his importunate prayer, he directed that

## Prayer

human means should be employed for his recovery from the disease. A poultice of figs—which to this day even in our country is often used in such a case in preference to bread and milk, or flaxseed—was applied to the malignant boil, and God's promise was given that in three days—not instantly, but in three days—the fig-poulticed patient should be able to go out to church. When, again, Paul found that he must continue to battle sickness, although he would have liked to have health, he obtained as a traveling companion a beloved physician; and it is even possible that it was on this physician's suggestion that Paul wrote that famous prescription for the stomach's sake and the often infirmities of young Timothy.

When James counseled the calling in of the elders of the church to pray over a sick person, he added the caution that they should not neglect the use of oil, which was the commonest medicine in all the East then as now. "Let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of

## Presumption not Faith

the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up;" that is, the Lord shall raise him up in response to the prayer of faith in connection with the use of oil.

The word here rendered "anointing" is *aleipsantes*, oiling, or smearing, the skin, as is done after bathing; it is not *chrio*, the word which designates the sacramental anointing. To smear, or anoint, the body with olive oil, cool or warm, is the commonest native treatment for bodily disorders in Syria and Egypt. Prominence is given to this treatment in the "Memoirs Relative to Egypt, during the Campaigns of Bonaparte," in a paper "On the Use of Oil in the Plague," by Citizen Desgenettes, chief physician to the army in the East.

In all sickness, as well as in all times of health, faith in God is more to be relied on than any human agency; but faith never decides for God in a matter which is clearly beyond human knowledge; nor will faith ever tempt God by refusing to

## Prayer

employ gratefully the means of help which God has already placed within its reach.

It may be best for us, or for our loved ones, to continue in sickness ; if so, let us learn, in whatsoever state we are, by the will of God, therein to be content. It may be that God will grant our faith-filled prayer for restored health, to ourselves or to those dear to us ; if so, let us use faithfully the means which tend to restoration ; for James, who knew as much about the right use of faith and its wrong use as any of the Bible writers, declares explicitly that "faith without works is dead ;" and a dead faith is only another name for presumption. To mistake presumption for faith is a sad mistake.

## IX

### Praying for Others

Prayer for others is as positive and important a duty as prayer for ourselves. Indeed, we cannot rightly pray for ourselves unless we include others in our prayers. Even if we were disposed to think chiefly or only of our personal interests, we must have a thought of what others can do for us and be to us, in order to our safety and welfare.

“None of us liveth to himself” alone; and, situated as we are in this world as it is, we are sure to be helped or harmed by others, apart from our own choice or power. If we would have God minister to or protect us, we must rely on his influence over others, and his guidance of them in their sphere, to secure to us that which we desire for ourselves. Unless God can control others, he is powerless in our behalf;

## Prayer

hence prayer for ourselves is incomplete except as it is prayer for others also.

A tourist, in climbing an Alpine summit, finds himself tied by a strong rope to his trusty guide, and to three of his fellow-tourists. As they skirt a perilous precipice, and he seeks God's protection along that dizzy height, he cannot pray confidently, "Lord, hold up *my* goings in a safe path, that *my* footsteps slip not, but as to my guide and companions, they must look out for themselves. Each of us is responsible for himself alone." The only proper prayer in such a case is, "Lord, hold up *our* goings in a safe path, that *our* footsteps slip not. Guide our guide, and keep all of us steady; for if one of us slips all of us may perish." Nor is this Swiss mountain-climbing the only thing in which we stand or fall with our fellow-travelers.

Prayer for ourselves includes prayer for others, when we are sick and trust ourselves to a physician. If we ask God's help, we must ask it for our doctor also.

## Praying for Others

If we pray for protection on an ocean voyage, our prayer should be for the captain and engineer of our steamer as well as for ourselves, in order that God may give us safety. If we would ask to be kept from harm on a trolley car, we must expect God to give skill and fidelity to the motor-man. Our protection in life and property pivots on the alertness and efficiency of the policeman, the night watchman, and the fireman, in their sphere, and when we would plead with God to keep us by day and by night we ought to take them into the scope of our prayers. Prayer for our daily bread involves the idea of prayer for the cook or baker, who might give us poison in our food.

In every sphere of life we are linked with others, and dependent on others for life and comfort. And it were useless for us to pray for God to help us, unless we include in our prayers the thought of God's oversight of others, and of his working for our good in and through them.

## Prayer

This is putting prayer for others on the lowest plane of mere selfish interest; but when we think of others in an unselfish way, we have need to realize that all that we wish and will and do in behalf of those dearest to us must fail of compassing our loving purposes for their highest welfare, unless God works in the direction of our holiest longings for them. Nothing that we can do for others is sure of a good result without God's blessing.

Nor does God leave any person wholly to himself for a personal decision on matters of the highest importance, or of the lowest, apart from the force of influences and circumstances outside of himself. If, therefore, we would do the best in our power for our dear ones, we must seek the help of Him who can do more than all others in bringing potent influences for good to bear on them, and in averting from them potent influences for evil.

Although it is true that "each one of us shall give account of himself to God," and

## Praying for Others

shall be compelled to meet the responsibility of his own decisions in every emergency of life, it is not for any one of us to say that he has been prompted to his final decisions by his uninfluenced personality, as if he stood all alone in the world. Nor can any one of us say that he is in no degree responsible for the influence he has exerted, or has refused to exert, over the lives of those he had the opportunity of shaping.

We are linked with others in the Alpine climbing of moral heights, as of material ones, so that our slipping or standing causes others to fall or to stand ; and, if we put out a hand of help, or refuse to do it, when our fellow is in peril, we are responsible for his course as well as for our own. This truth carries with it a corresponding measure of duty. The command to us, "Bear ye one another's burdens," is set over against the declaration that "each man shall bear his own burden." Just why we are responsible for

## Prayer

others, while they are responsible for themselves, we cannot understand or explain ; but we know that it is so, and we must bear ourselves accordingly.

If we would have a child of ours preserved from temptation to evil, or preserved while in it, we ought to be ready to ask a friend, who was near that child while we were at a distance, to have a watchful eye over him, or to speak a timely word to him. Our consciousness of the child's freedom of choice would never hinder our seeking from another good offices in his behalf. And why should we think that God is unable or unwilling to exert as positive influence over one dear to us as any human companion ?

As in the case of a child, so in the case of any one in whom we have a personal interest. God is always near one whom we love. God is always ready to hear prayer for one for whom we pray. God has made the prayer of faith a potent agency in the universe ; and if we would have the influ-

## Praying for Others

ences of the universe work together for good to one with whom we are linked by visible and invisible ties, we owe it to that loved one, to ourselves, and to God, to pray in faith for his protection and guidance and control.

Bible teachings are in accord with the lessons of reason and experience as to our responsibility for others, and as to our duty of including others in our prayers. Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other Old Testament worthies, prayed for others, and were heard in that for which they prayed. Jesus honored the prayer of faith in behalf of those who as yet showed no sign of personal faith in their choice. When a sad-hearted father brought a demon-possessed son to Jesus with the prayer, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us [on me and my child], and help us," Jesus answered with the words, "If thou canst! All things are possible [in another's behalf] to him that believeth." The father

## Prayer

believed, and the child was made whole. Jesus did not say, "If that child wants help, let him ask for it in faith," but he said, as it were, "If thou canst have faith in his behalf, there is hope for him, for all things are possible to him that believeth in another's behalf."

This was in a matter of demoniacal possession, but why should we doubt that it will be the same in the matter of spiritual choices? "Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven, or to say, Arise, and walk?" Jesus evidently believed in the power of intercessory prayer, and he was not staggered by the difficulty of explaining how God could give wholeness to a man in answer to another's prayer without interfering with that other's freedom of choice.

When Jesus saw that his disciple Peter was in special danger of falling away from his service, he did not refrain from intercessory prayer because he knew that Peter was finally responsible for his own action

## **Praying for Others**

in the moral crisis, but he prayed earnestly and in faith for Peter's upholding. "Simon, Simon," said Jesus, "behold Satan asked to have you [or obtained you by asking], that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not: and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren."

When the Roman soldiers were crucifying Jesus, his intercessory prayer for them with his dying breath was, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." Jesus evidently had no reluctance to intercessory prayer because of his fear that God could not grant any spiritual blessing to a sinner who did not himself ask for it. The first word in the prayer taught by Jesus to his disciples is "our," as showing that we are to pray with and for others, and not for ourselves alone.

As we love God we ought to love all whom God loves, and our prayers ought to be as earnest and as constant and as far reaching as our love. When the Jews were

## Prayer

about to be carried away into Babylon, the message of the Lord to them was, "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." In the same spirit Jesus said to his disciples, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you: that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven."

In emphasis of this Christian duty of praying for others, in the spirit of Jesus, and in truest God-likeness, the Apostle Paul writes earnestly, "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men." Unless we pray for others, we are lacking in that spirit in which alone we can pray hopefully for ourselves, and we are living in neglect of a prime duty to God's dear ones who need and deserve our prayers.

## X

### Leading Others in Prayer

It is one thing to be in the spirit of personal prayer at all times; it is quite another thing to be ready to lead others in prayer at one time in particular. Yet these two things are often confounded; and the mistake is made of supposing that the possession of a spirit of prayer gives a fitness for leading others in prayer on every occasion. This mistake it is which makes public prayer so much less the impressive and inspiring service that it ought to be.

Being alike ready at all times for any service whatsoever, is being poorly fitted for such service at any time whatsoever. He who never falls below a common average, never rises above it. A dead level is always a *dead* level; there is no life in it. The most tiresome scenery in the world is a boundless plain.

## Prayer

Water will stagnate and corrupt, if it has neither fall nor tides, neither ripple nor waves. He who is just as ready at one time as another to sleep or to eat, to laugh or to cry, to ride or to walk, to sing or to pray, to sit at home or to go out and see his neighbors, can never do any one of these things with a real relish, or to the satisfaction of those who are with him. He who is never excited, never off his center, never enthusiastic and never depressed, might have got along with the Laodiceans, who were never cold, nor ever hot, but always nauseatingly lukewarm; but he is the last man in the world to make friends or to win admiration in the communities which are in the van of social progress nowadays.

Peculiarly is it true in the field of mental activity that no general acquisition obviates the necessity of special preparation. If you hear a man make a good off-hand speech, you may be sure that that speech was not made off-hand. It was prepared

## **Leading Others in Prayer**

for, in some way. If you find that a man seems always ready with his voice or his pen, you may set it down as certain that he makes himself specially ready for each call on his voice or pen. There are no exceptions to this truth.

On one occasion, when Daniel Webster was urged to make an address, he pleaded lack of time for fitting preparation. "O Mr. Webster!" was the response, "anything you say, even without preparation, will have weight with an audience. You need not prepare for it." "If my words have weight with others," said Mr. Webster, "it is because I never speak without preparation." And that is the thought of every wise leader of his fellows.

When some one complimented M. Thiers on his effective impromptu speeches in the French Assembly, M. Thiers replied, that he never insulted the Assembly with impromptu speeches, but he rose at five o'clock every morning to prepare his "imprompts" for the day.

## Prayer

Dr. Thomas Arnold declared that he never taught a lesson—even in the line of studies that he had a lifetime of general preparation in—without specially preparing himself for that one class recitation. And that it was that kept Thomas Arnold the good teacher to the last. So it is all the way up and down the scale. He who shows any special fitness for any special work has made special preparation for that special work. General fitness is not a safe reliance for anything in particular.

Public prayer is a very different matter from private prayer. Private prayer is the emptying of one's soul unreservedly to God; there need be no constraint in it whatsoever. Public prayer ought to have no such emptying of the leader's personal soul to God, in the presence of others; constraint so far is a duty, from the beginning to the end of such prayer.

If one is in the constant habit of personal prayer, accustomed to keep himself always open before God in confession and

## **Leading Others in Prayer**

supplication, he is in all the greater danger of failing to lead others fittingly in public prayer; and there is all the more need of his making himself ready, by deliberate plan and purpose, to keep himself within the bounds of proper public prayer while leading the worship of others, as distinct from that unrestrained freedom of personal prayer which is as natural to him in his daily life as his instinctive breathing.

A member of the congregation of a prominent church went to his pastor at one time with a word of warning about his pulpit prayers. "You do altogether too much of private confession of your sins in public," he said. "You let yourself out there in entire freeness to God, forgetful of the fact that your people are hearing you. Some of your confessions they could join in; but others they know nothing about. You give yourself away as a pastor, by telling aloud your weaknesses, your temptations, and your special sins. It is all right to tell God of those things in your

## Prayer

closet, but don't say anything about them in the pulpit." There was a wise caution for other pastors in that counsel from an observant hearer.

Praying is not the same thing everywhere. It is one thing in the closet, another thing in the family, another thing in the Sunday-school, another thing in the social prayer-meeting, and yet another thing in the sanctuary, with the general congregation of worshipers. He who does not consider these differences, and make himself ready accordingly for the special service to which he is summoned, neither knows his duty nor does it, in the line of prayer.

As a practical matter, the clergyman who has power in public prayer is sure to be found a clergyman who makes special preparation beforehand for his public prayers. It is a shame for any clergyman to go into his pulpit without specific preparation for every portion of the service he is to lead,—for his Bible-reading, his hymn-reading,

## **Leading Others in Prayer**

his preaching, and his praying. It is not enough for him to be in the general spirit of Bible-reading, and hymn-reading, and preaching, and praying. He has a particular duty for that day, before that congregation, in view of the peculiar needs of those who are there before him, and the peculiar circumstances of that hour—as apart from every other hour of their lives and of his life.

Unless he makes ready for that particular duty he is unready for it; and his hearers are aware of that fact before the service is half over with, whether he knows it or not. Special preparation for the public prayers of the day is made by the best clergymen generally. Those who fail to make such preparation show it in their failure to have the results of that preparation. And that such failures in pulpit services are pitifully common cannot be denied.

Our Lord told his disciples that there were times when they need take no

## Prayer

thought in advance how or what they should speak before others, for it should be given them in that hour what they were to say; but when they asked him how they should *pray*, he did not tell them to rely wholly on the inspiration of the hour, but he gave for their guidance a pattern of prayer, the structure and methods of which he seemed to think were worthy of their study. There are, however, ten leaders in social or public worship who take pains to make ready for a sermon or an address, where there is one who prepares himself for a public prayer. Why does any man slight the latter service in comparison with the former? Is it because he deems it of less importance? Or is it because he thinks he has so much more skill and power in leading others in an address to God, than in making a direct address to his fellows?

A prominent clergyman, in addressing the students of a divinity school, urged the importance of careful preparation for all

## **Leading Others in Prayer**

pulpit exercises. Referring to the common idea that God would inspire the unprepared clergyman to pray effectively in public, he said, "Remember, young men, that God does not inspire vacuity." Another clergyman, when asked if a man could be as earnest and sincere when he had prepared himself carefully for such a service, as he could be if he trusted to the inspiration of the moment, replied: "God puts no premium on slovenliness. You need God's help if you have done your best to make yourself ready for his service. You have no right to ask his help, if you have neglected preparatory thought and prayer."

If a clergyman needs special preparation for leading in public prayer, much more so a layman. And the best laymen recognize this fact. Professor John S. Hart, the first Editor of The Sunday School Times, was quite a model superintendent in his day. He was a man of disciplined mind, of ripe culture, and of rare devoutness. He had

## Prayer

much experience, and much impressiveness and unction, in public prayer.

If any superintendent would be justified in feeling that it was unnecessary for him to make special preparation for an opening prayer in his Sunday-school, it would seem to be such a man as Professor Hart. But, on the contrary, *he* always prepared himself with much pains for this service. He told the writer, on one occasion, that during all the time he was in charge of the State Normal School of New Jersey he made particular preparation for each day's morning prayer at the opening of school, and that he still preserved the outline plans of all those prayers.

Writing on this theme in counsel to superintendents, not long before his decease, Professor Hart said of the methods of study for a prayer, and of the value of such study : "Each week some new want will arise. Some scholar or teacher will be sick. Some family connected with the school will be in trouble. Some inquiring

## **Leading Others in Prayer**

soul will be craving for an expression of sympathy. Be it your care to study how these various wants may find expression in your opening prayer, without improper and offensive personalities.

"Besides these wants, each week's lesson, you will find, has certain leading thoughts. It has been selected with the express design of teaching certain religious truths, and these truths have a direct bearing upon the daily life of every member of your school, both scholars and teachers. Having yourself studied the lesson and filled your mind to saturation with the truths which it contains, you will find how much you need divine help to bring those truths home to your heart and conscience, so that you may carry them into practical life. This, your want, is the want of every teacher and scholar. See how you can in your prayer, without offense, give utterance to this want. Try, in short, to turn the lesson into a prayer, without turning it into a harangue. Let it be a real prayer, ad-

## Prayer

dressed to God, not an exposition addressed to the school."

In testimony, out of his experience and observation, Professor Hart added: "As you grow older in the service, you may learn that those superintendents who have been longest in the harness, and are most familiar with the work, are often the very ones who habitually make the most painstaking preparation for each specific occasion. I could tell you of veteran superintendents who habitually spend from one to two hours of each Sabbath evening in preparing for the opening service of the next Sabbath."

It may seem to some that it would be easier for such a man as Professor Hart, with his habits of study, to prepare himself for an appropriate prayer, than for one unaccustomed to systematic and persistent study to do a thing of this sort. "I could never study for a prayer," says one superintendent or another. "I shouldn't know how to set about it. If I pray at all, I

## **Leading Others in Prayer**

must ask the Lord to guide and help me, and then go right at it, forgetting all about theories and plans."

But many a man who has at first said this same thing about the study of a lesson, has afterwards learned how to fit himself by lesson study for lesson teaching. He, then, who never has studied for a prayer, ought not to feel that he never can do it. When he realizes the importance of thorough preparation, he can set himself to learn its methods. Now for an illustration in this line.

Some years ago the writer was at a Sunday-school in a town in Michigan. The lesson for that day was "The Smitten Rock," the narrative of the rock smitten by Moses in the wilderness. As the superintendent went on with his opening prayer, the writer was impressed with both its spirit and substance. It was strikingly appropriate to the day's lesson. It was delightfully reverent, inspiring, and impressive. It seemed to bring together and to

## Prayer

uplift the entire school in devout and loving communion with God, over the theme of the hour's study, and to express the love and the longing of every grateful and needy heart in the assembly.

The writer felt that he had rarely listened to such a Sunday-school prayer, had rarely been so helpfully led in prayer; and at the close of the school, in conversation with the superintendent's wife, he expressed his interest in that portion of the service. "I am glad you feel so," was the answer; "for my husband gives a great deal of study to his Sunday-school prayers." Ah! that was it. It was the same there as elsewhere. Faithful and faith-filled work was not without its effect and its reward. And at once the writer applied to that superintendent to learn his method of preparing to pray, nor did he seek information in vain.

That superintendent was a railroad conductor, having little time—only odd moments at the best—for preliminary study

## **Leading Others in Prayer**

of any sort. Early in his Sunday-school work he had felt the importance of preparation for his opening prayer in the school; but for a time he had hesitated to give study to this exercise, lest he should deprive it of some of its vitality and fervor. Even when he was convinced that it would be quite right and safe for him to take with him thoughts and words, as well as feeling, when he turned to the Lord as the leader of a praying Sunday-school, he was yet unfamiliar with wise methods of study; but he finally worked out and adopted a satisfactory plan.

From the beginning of each week he would have his next Sunday's prayer in mind, as he studied his next Sunday's lesson. Filling himself with the lesson, becoming imbued with its spirit and impressed by its teachings, through prayerful study, he would proceed to make an outline of its main features to guide him in the plan of a prayer.

First he would consider in what char-

## Prayer

acter God is presented in the lesson, that he might be addressed in that character,—as Father, as King, as Guide, as Rock, as Tower, as Captain of Salvation. Then he would note the figures or comparisons in the lesson by which God's dealings with his people are shown, that they might be employed in the petitions or thanksgivings of the prayer. The teachings of the lesson would be next observed, that supplications for their practical benefits might be offered up for all. In closing, there would be an ascription of praise to God, in the line of the opening recognition of his distinctive character as shown in that lesson.

The prayer would be brief, not above three to four minutes at the outside; but it would have just as much more in it than an ordinary prayer of two or three times its length as was secured to it by the added study which it represented.

In the case of the prayer which the writer heard, the schedule of preparation

## **Leading Others in Prayer**

had been preserved by the superintendent, and it was shown in illustration of the method asked for. In that lesson God appeared as the merciful and compassionate God, and Christ was pictured as the spiritual Rock. The opening call of the prayer was, "Most merciful God, our kind heavenly Father, help *us* to drink from that spiritual Rock—the Rock Christ Jesus."

Among the symbols and likenesses of the lesson were the flinty rock, the potent rod, the gushing waters. Among the petitions of the prayer were these: "And as at the touch of the rod in Moses' hand the refreshing waters came forth from the rock in plentiful abundance for the thirsty children of Israel to drink, so to-day, blessed Saviour, let the touch of our prayers of faith bring forth the richest joys of heavenly refreshing from thee—thou fount and source of every blessing. And likewise may our hearts, touched with the finger of thy love, burst forth in joyful,

## Prayer

in triumphant, and in everlasting, praises of our Redeemer and our Lord."

The lesson teachings noted were, that all good comes from God; that we are in daily dependence upon him; that we need his sustaining presence, and that we should obey all his commandments. The petitions based on these teachings were: "Assist us, we pray thee, to fully comprehend the truths taught in our lesson to-day: that all good cometh by thee; that daily and hourly we are in need of thy sustaining presence to carry us through the sore perplexities and trials of this life; and that in *all* things we should observe perfect obedience to thy commandments and requirements—perfect submission to thy holy will."

The closing ascription was, "And unto him who leadeth us in green pastures and beside the still waters, and who will at last, if we are faithful unto the end, lead us to living fountains of heavenly waters which forever flow from out the great white

## **Leading Others in Prayer**

throne of God and of the Lamb—unto him be honor and glory and dominion, forever and ever. Amen."

The fervor and spirit of this prayer are of course in a measure lost by a formal quotation of its language; but they were certainly none the less real and impressive because of that superintendent's intelligent interest in the theme of his prayer, and of his previous understanding of what he was to ask for.

He was not in the habit of writing out his phrases of prayer in full, but of noting under the several heads what he purposed to pray for. Hence he could say, in speaking of the results to himself of his preparations, "When I stand up for prayer, I have not to grope blindly about for this or that and the other thing to say. I have my prayer-heads mentally before me, and I pass from one to the other, and when done I have drawn the prayer right out of the lesson as water from a well, and tried, at least, to make it one which

## Prayer

can lift the school with me to Jehovah's throne."

This illustration discloses one plan of preliminary study for the opening prayer in Sunday-school. It may be suited to many persons; to others it may not be. As the superintendent said of it, "It is a plan which all would find easy after a little time. At first, and especially if their memory was poor, it would be hard; but study will do much, and asking Jesus' help will do the rest." Yet no one plan is best for all superintendents. The chief thing emphasized by such an example is the truth that preparation for public prayer is wise and practicable, and that it in no degree diminishes the spiritual fervor of the prayer.

And the superintendent who prepares himself for leading his school in prayer will not expect his teachers to be ready for a similar service without similar preparation. Henry P. Haven—"model superintendent" as he has been called—was in the habit of notifying his teachers, at the opening of

## **Leading Others in Prayer**

the month, of the time when they would be called on, during that month, to lead the school in prayer. Then they had no excuse for being unprepared to lead in prayer when the time came. Similarly, there are thoughtful superintendents who quietly notify in advance the teacher whom they are to ask to close the ordinary weekly teachers'-meeting with prayer.

The superintendent who would call on a teacher to lead in the opening prayer of the Sunday-school without a word of previous notice evidently lacks an appreciation of the privilege and duty of preparation for public prayer. Mr. C. B. Stout, of New Jersey, gave this illustration of the difficulties in such a case: "Farmer Johnson comes to Sunday-school very much troubled over a sick cow. As he is thinking of her, he is suddenly called on to lead in prayer. If he prays out freely, he'll find it hard not to pray for that cow. It isn't fair to put Farmer Johnson to such a test."

We are not to attempt, nor are we to

## Prayer

expect others to attempt, to lead others in prayer without having been led in preparation for such prayer. For ourselves and for others the injunction is: "When thou goest to the house of God," and art called to lead in prayer, "be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few"—and well considered.

## XI

### Helping Another in Prayer

Prayer in private, for one's self or for others, is a purely personal and individual concern. It is wholly between one's self and God. No one else is to be considered in its thought or phrasing. In this it differs from public prayer with or for others. When others are to be led in prayer, they are carefully to be borne in mind in what is spoken and in the spirit of one's speech. Public prayer is necessarily quite different from private prayer.

Still another kind of prayer, differing from prayer by one's self and prayer with an assemblage, is prayer with and for another individual, prayer by a sick-bed, prayer with one in bereavement or sorrow, prayer with an anxious or a doubting soul, prayer with one who needs help and guidance and comfort. Such prayer is often a

## Prayer

duty, and it behooves one to be ready for it when necessary, and to conduct it considerately, sympathetically, and wisely.

If you would help another in prayer, you must first put yourself alongside of him as he is, in order to bring him to the plane where you would like him to be. If he is cast down by sorrow or penitence, or perplexed by doubt or anxiety, it will not do for you to start out with a clear, sharp note of triumphant faith, or of confident rejoicing. He is not ready for that. It is likely to discourage him. If he thinks that you cannot understand his case, or be touched by the feeling of his infirmities as he is, you are not the helper that he needs. His heart cannot open out toward yours.

Unless you perceive his present state of mind, and see just how he is feeling, and why he feels so, you are unprepared to pray with him in such tenderness and sympathy as convinces him that you are his friend and helper, and makes him ready to be led along by you in the path you

## Helping Another in Prayer

would have him walk. If your opening words of prayer seem to condemn his present state of mind, or to reproach him for feeling as he feels, you will fail of winning his confidence or of being his personal helper. Beware of such a beginning of your prayer as puts a barrier between him and you at the start. You can never help a despondent soul upward by soaring above him, and summoning him to rise and accompany you in your flight, before you have stooped down to him, and gained a hold on him in his despondency. He must be taken as he is, even though you do not intend to leave him so.

It touches a heart deeply to find itself understood and sympathized with, especially if it has felt itself stricken beyond comparison or appreciation. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness." There is no doubt on that point. And when, in its grief, the heart's hopeless cry is, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, where-

## Prayer

with the Lord hath afflicted me," it is a startling surprise, that may even bring comfort to the soul, to find that another understands this bitterness and sorrow, even if it has not experienced its very like. Help like this comes in sympathetic prayer from one who kneels by the stricken one, and pours out to God his own soul in supplications that the aching heart can make its own, even while it could not have framed them intelligibly.

Kneeling by the bedside of a bereaved mother, who was mourning hopelessly the death of her dearest child, and who did not even wish to be comforted by any words of cheer, a clergyman who had experienced the loss of a greatly loved child under peculiarly trying circumstances, began his gently spoken prayer substantially thus: "Dear Saviour, thou knowest the depths of this great sorrow; and we are sure that thou wouldest gladly give help, even by bringing back to the longing heart of this mourning mother the dear child whom

## Helping Another in Prayer

thou hast taken from her. Thou canst do it, dear Lord ; and we know that somehow, hard as it is for us to understand it, only love keeps thee back from doing so. Thou understandest this mother's love and this mother's grief. Thou dost thyself love her, and love her child, very dearly. Her dear child understands thee now better than she can ; and that dear child would say to her as thou dost say, Mother, take comfort. If you knew all, you could not wish it different"—

At this point, the mother burst out with the cry, "Do you think that's so ?" Her heart was now open to a comforting thought ; and the way was ready for a common prayer by the two believers to their common Saviour, in their common sorrow. She was led into a frame of mind for that prayer by being sympathized with while she yet lacked that frame of mind. Similar words of comfort and help are often spoken in prayer by one who seeks to minister to a needy soul in the spirit of

## Prayer

Christ. They ought to be spoken yet more frequently.

An army deserter in war time was under sentence of death. Handcuffed and fettered, he was crouching by starlight on the banks of the James River. A chaplain sat by him, who had vainly proffered him help and counsel. The deserter wanted no prayers in his behalf, no advice or sympathy. He said he had "lived game," and he would "die game." The chaplain had, however, learned enough of his story to know that he had a mother in his distant home, for whom he still had feelings of affection. The chaplain knelt and began a prayer tenderly in behalf of the condemned soldier. Praying to the God of all comfort, he asked that, even though he might lack comfort, it might be given to the crushed and sad-hearted mother, when she learned, in her lonely home, of the death of the son of her love.

At this mention, in the prayer, of the breaking mother-heart, the stubborn son

## **Helping Another in Prayer**

uttered a wild cry, as if his own heart had burst, and he threw himself forward on the sward, and sobbed great sobs of grief. The chaplain stretched himself alongside of him, and for a while he simply showed his sympathy by holding his arm lovingly about the soldier's neck and letting him cry out his cry. Then he spoke tenderly, and asked if he might not pray for that mother's boy as well as for her. All stubbornness was gone. The two prayed together now, and the chaplain could help the soldier in prayer as he could not before.

Many a soul which cannot, as things are, help itself in prayer, can be helped by another in prayer. It waits for some man to put its needy form into the healing waters of the spiritual Bethesda, that it may receive a blessing, and it ought not to wait in vain. If a needy soul cannot go alone to Jesus, it should be carried. As the palsied man was borne by loving hands, and let down through the roof, to be laid at the feet of the Great Physician,

## Prayer

so it is for us to upbear on our arms of faith, in faith-filled prayer, one and another spiritually palsied soul, and lay them down at the feet of Jesus. He can heal them, and we can help them thus to their healing.

Praying with another, who is not in a state to pray for himself, is one way of using prayer to a good purpose, and is one way of helping another who sorely needs help. Prayer is always to the same Hearer of prayer, and our prayers are always from the same petitioner, but different ones who are prayed with require different words and methods of prayer.

## XII

### Praying to God as a Friend

We are accustomed to think of going to God as to a father, in the spirit of a child, to tell him of our troubles, and to ask help from him in our needs; and it ordinarily seems to us as if there could be no closer, or dearer relation than this between God and ourselves. But we have a right to aspire to a yet nearer and more intimate relation with God than a child, as a child, can have with a father as a father,—and that is the relation of friend to friend. The highest and most sacred relation in which a man can stand toward God is that of a friend; and that relation, which is open to all of us, is recognized so rarely!

It is a crowning glory of the religion of the Bible—the one true religion—that it opens the possibility of a *friendship* with God. Other religions, in their imperfect-

## Prayer

ness at the best, teach men to fear the gods, and even to have a hope of serving the gods; but only the religion of the Bible gives the conception of God as the friend of those who will lovingly trust themselves to him, and as welcoming their friendship. In the universal prayer-cry of men, terror or despair seems to be a prompting cause, where there is no love or trust. Many will cry out to God, or to the gods, to let them utterly alone, or to spare them from harm, who never think of seeking divine communion or fellowship with a heavenly Friend.

In the early history of the race God tried in vain to win men to himself in willing trust; but they stood aloof from him, and would not believe that he was as loving as he claimed to be. By and by, in his effort to disclose his spirit and purposes to men, he took one man out of an idolatrous nation, and, as it were, put his arm about him, and drew him to himself, asking him if he would let him be his friend. And

## Praying to God as a Friend

Abraham believed God, and yielded himself to God in the spirit of a friend; and that was all that God asked of him. So God counted that loving trust of Abraham as evidence of Abraham's friendship, "and he was called the Friend of God."

Abraham "the friend" thus became the father of the faithful, and to this day the dearest children of God are those who count God their friend, and who are willing to live as friends of God, being, through their loving faith in God as their friend, the children of faithful Abraham—God's friend. When Jesus Christ came into this world as the manifestation of God's love as a friend, he called to himself those who were willing to love and to trust him; and before he left them he told them that he counted them his friends, and he wanted them to trust him as their friend. "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you," he said. And so, in the Old Testament and the New, the highest, closest, and most sacred relation between

## Prayer

God and God's dear ones is that of friendship.

What comfort in going to God in prayer as to a friend ! It is so different from going to him as to a sovereign. It is different even from going to him as to a father. It is not that God has ceased to be both sovereign and father to him who approaches him ; but it is that, while sovereign and father, he is above all a friend. A subject who realizes that his sovereign is his personal friend, approaches his sovereign as a friend rather than as a sovereign. And when a son has come to count his father as his best friend, that son merges his thought of his father in the higher and holier thought of him as his friend. This truth may give us a suggestion of how God loves to have us come to him in prayer, and how we are privileged to pray to him.

In a true friendship, each friend is more interested in his friend than in himself. His thought is not of what his friendship

## **Praying to God as a Friend**

demands of him, but of what it permits him to do and to be for his friend. The extremist claims of his friendship are counted by him, not tasks, but privileges. There is no room for selfishness in its fullest exercise. Yet there is a joy in the communion and intercourse of friendship. See how this showed itself in the dealings of God with Abraham, and in the ways of Abraham with God.

When God was to execute judgment in the home of the kinsman of Abraham, he said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?" God's friendship forbade such concealment, and he made known to Abraham his purpose concerning Sodom. At once Abraham recognized and responded to this proof of friendship, and his chief thought was of whether it would be well for God's reputation for him to do as he purposed. "Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked?" he asked. "That be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" On this

## Prayer

basis his prayer went up to God repeatedly. He prayed as a friend to a friend, freely and trustfully. Of course, such praying was welcomed and approved by God.

Again, when Israel incurred God's judgment by idolatry in the wilderness, Moses prayed as a friend to a friend. He asked God not to blot out Israel as a people, lest God himself should be misjudged among the nations. "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, saying, For evil did he bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains?" Moses asked that he himself might die, instead of the people, and thereby God be an avenger of evil without suffering in his repute as a covenant-keeping God. "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin!" he cried. "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." This prayer God heard and answered, because it was a prayer of friendship. And such praying is always acceptable to God.

## **Praying to God as a Friend**

What a privilege thus to pray to God as to a friend! To go to him in loving trust, interested in his cause, and sure of his being interested in us and our welfare; to tell him of our needs and our trials; to ask his counsel and help, and to commit our case and cause to him with never a doubt or a fear! Such praying may be ours. We have no right to come short of it. God is the friend of whoever will accept his friendship; and all that he was to Abraham he will be to us, if we will but trust him as Abraham trusted.

“A Friend in sorest need,  
Of kindest word and deed,—  
And, best of all, a Friend

Whose love flows on and on, and knows no end.”

This privilege we often fail to improve, and it is to our shame that we do so. If we realized always that God is our friend, we should be readier to bear ourselves toward him as his friends. And this attitude on our part is an unfailing duty. In coming to God as a friend, our prayer

## Prayer

should be, that we may ever manifest to  
him the spirit of true friendship.

“ Lord, make me coy and tender to offend :

In friendship first, I think, if that agree

Which I intend,

Unto my friend’s intent and end.

I would not use a friend as I use thee.

“ If any touch my friend or his good name,

It is my honor and my love to free

His blasted fame

From the least spot or thought of blame.

I could not use a friend as I use thee.

“ When that my friend pretendeth to a place,

I quit my interest, and leave it free ;

But when thy grace

Sues for my heart, I thee displace ;

Nor would I use a friend as I use thee.”

## XIII

### Getting Comfort by Prayer

One of the most comprehensive, suggestive, and satisfying descriptions of the God of love, as given in the Bible, is that he is the “God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” Comfort is what every one of us needs, and what every one of us values. Others also need and value comfort. To be able to get comfort and to give comfort, makes us blessed and a blessing.

Comfort is a great deal more than is ordinarily understood by it. To comfort is to give solace, soothing, cheer, sympathy, refreshing, to brace up, to support, to impart strength, to make courageous, to guide, to instruct, to inspire. A comforter

## Prayer

is one who stands by another, making that other's cause his own. All this and more is included in the idea of the comfort which the God of all comfort gives to us, and enables us to give to others; the various words in the Old Testament and the New which are translated "comfort" combine to indicate this. As prayer in its widest sense is communion with God, prayer is the means of comfort to us whenever we need comfort of any sort for ourselves or for others. And this is the comfort of prayer to the God of all comfort.

No one of us can say at all times that he is so strong, so capable, so well furnished, and so independent, that comfort from another is not essential to his happiness and efficiency. Emergencies are sure to come to every one of us, when he needs comfort, and when he would welcome it gratefully. In sickness a physician within call is a comfort. In loneliness or sorrow a sympathizing friend is a comfort. In time of doubt or bewilderment a sure guide

## Getting Comfort by Prayer

is a comfort. In peril from enemies, or from the elements, a strong helper is a comfort. Even at the best, it is a comfort to be inspired to higher, better achieving, through the example, the encouragement, and the wise counsel, of one whose superiority we cannot but recognize and rejoice in.

In every sphere of human thought or action there comes a time when "two are better than one," and when it is "woe to him that is alone when he falleth, and hath not another to lift him up." As on the lower plane of our human needs, so on the higher plane of our spiritual possibilities. He who is in loving communion by prayer with the God of all comfort, is superior to the trials and necessities of life, and never knows the wo of being alone in any trouble.

There are in the Bible special promises, from God, of comfort in response to prayer, in every emergency in which we find ourselves; and the testing of those promises brings the comfort we need. In sickness, or other bodily infirmity, the best human

## Prayer

physician knows that he cannot give health or help except by God's blessing ; but God is the Great Physician. His word is explicit, "I am the Lord that healeth thee ;" and when we cry to him in faith, " Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed," we may know that just when and as it is best for us the answer to that prayer will come, and will cause us to say in gratitude, "O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me." Meantime, the praying sick one is assured that "the Lord will support him upon the couch of languishing," and make "all his bed in his sickness." There is comfort to the sick, and to the friends of the sick, in faith-filled prayer under circumstances like these.

There are times in our human experience when no earthly friend or helper can be to us all that we need, and when we seem utterly to lack the comprehension and sympathy which we must have, or despair. We dare not hope for a full understanding of our innermost self by any human heart, or

## Getting Comfort by Prayer

any ministry to our uttermost wants. The cry of the sinking soul is:

" If all the gentlest-hearted friends I know  
Concentred in one heart their gentleness,  
That still grew gentler, till its pulse was less  
For life than pity, I should yet be slow  
To bring my own heart nakedly below  
The palm of such a friend, that he should press  
Motive, condition, means, appliances,  
My false ideal joy and fickle wo,  
Out full to light and knowledge. I should fear  
Some plait between the brows,—some rougher  
chime  
In the free voice."

Yet he who made us understands us, and we need not fear to have our hearts open to his loving look. "The Lord is full of pity, and merciful." His love for us is not because of our loveliness, but because of his lovingness. There is comfort in this thought, as we turn restfully to him before whom "all things are naked and laid open," and confidently ask his sympathy.

In some hour of sad bereavement we feel that no sorrow was ever like our sorrow, and that in our loneliness we cannot be com-

## Prayer

forted. Then the gentle voice of our Father comes with its matchless assurance of tender ministry in our grief: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted." And that promise is made good to us as we rest on it.

Disappointed in the failure or betrayal of one on whom we had leaned without the shadow of a doubt, it seems to us that no one can ever again be trusted, and we are ready to give up even faith itself, and to despair. A gracious whisper speaks comfortingly to our souls: "I the Lord change not." "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and forever."

When tempted and tried beyond our conscious strength, and our fear is that we cannot bear up against the terrible pressure, the one word of comfort that is sufficient for us is: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation make also the

## Getting Comfort by Prayer

way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it."

When we find ourselves incompetent for any work we have to do, or feel ourselves weak in any contest to which we have been summoned, we are entitled to call confidently on God for courage and strength and support, and the comforting answer will come back to us: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

When we are at our wits' end as to our duty, and long to know just what to do and how to do it, the divinely authorized message comes to us: "If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting." And thus the way is clear to comfort in prayer for any discouraged or perplexed soul.

So all the way along in our human life

## Prayer

course. No man need be without comfort while the gates of prayer are open to him. He who enters within those gates can have comfort in all things and always. God has comfort for him in his every hour of need, if he will but call for it, and accept it as proffered. No human friend can get so near to us as God. We cannot find such sympathy from any human heart as he gives to us freely. There is no such comfort on earth as that which comes in and through prayer. No man can know what real comfort is if he refrains from prayerful communion with the God of all comfort.

Take comfort, then, daily, in constant prayer. In such communion with God

"We kneel, how weak! We rise, how full of prayer!

Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,  
Or others—that we are not always strong;  
That we are ever overborne with care;  
That we should ever weak or heartless be,  
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,—  
And joy, and strength, and courage, are with  
thee?"

## XIV

### Perils of Prayer

A great deal is said of the privilege and the advantages of prayer, while very little is said of the responsibility and the perils of prayer. Yet every privilege is sure to impose a correspondent responsibility; and every responsibility has its accompanying perils. He who would exercise the privilege of prayer, should know that that privilege, like every other, brings perils with its responsibility.

Christian believers are accustomed to quote with hearty satisfaction the Bible injunctions and encouragements to prayer, and to comfort themselves with the Bible record of delightful answers to prayer. “Call unto me, and I will answer thee ;” “All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive ;” “Continue in prayer ;” “Pray without ceasing ;”

## Prayer

“ Come boldly unto the throne of grace ; ”  
“ The prayer of faith shall save the sick ; ”  
—such texts as these are often in the mouths of those who love the Word of God ; and the wonderful answers to prayer vouchsafed to Abraham, and to Moses, and to Elijah, and to Elisha, and to Hezekiah, and to Daniel, and to Cornelius, and to Paul, are taken to heart by them as they turn to God in prayer.

But believers are not so ready to note and heed the various Bible warnings on the subject of prayer. “ Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God ; for God is in heaven and thou upon earth : therefore let thy words be few ; ” “ We know not what to pray for as we ought ; ” “ Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” To such texts they ascribe less importance in considering the duties which grow out of the privilege of prayer. Nor are they so quick to appreciate the plain lesson of the

## Perils of Prayer

inspired declaration concerning the praying Israelites, in the wilderness, who asked amiss, that they might consume it upon their lusts: "God . . . gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." Yet it is quite as important to recognize the perils of lustful and unwise prayers, as it is to realize the true privilege of right-minded and reverently trustful prayers.

King Hezekiah had a good record in a well-spent life, when God gave him notice that he was to finish his earthly course and enter into rest. But Hezekiah was not content with God's ordering. He wanted to live on in his earthly rule, not for God's sake but for his own. God granted his prayer, and gave him fifteen years more on earth; and how sad was the result!

His vainglorious display of his treasures to the messengers of the king of Babylon excited the cupidity of that king, and all Jerusalem and Judah suffered in consequence. It was after he rose up from his sick-bed that a son Manasseh was born to

## Prayer

him, who, as his successor, not only became an idolater himself, but led his people into worse forms of evil-doing than the old Canaanites were guilty of.

If Hezekiah had prayed for prolonged life in order to do some special service for God here, a blessing might have come with an answer to his prayer. But his prayer was a selfish one, and its answer brought consequences that were cause for mourning and sorrow. The Bible narrative illustrates the perils of unwise praying.

To turn from the Bible record to the record of our personal experiences, it will be found that there are few Christians who cannot recall some longing of their hearts, and some cry of their souls, which subsequently proved to be against their own highest welfare; who cannot, in fact, remember some prayer to God, offered by them in all earnestness, which would have proved their ruin had it been answered according to their desires. In the causes of gratitude which flood our souls when

## Perils of Prayer

we look back over the way in which God has led us to the present day, hardly anything stands out more prominently than God's love in refusing to grant to us many of the prayers which we offered to him.

And just so long as God's wisdom is superior to our wisdom, there is need of our relying on his love to deny us our petitions, when to grant them would prove our ruin, or would sorely harm us; and there is reason for our trembling in view of the perils which accompany the privilege and responsibilities of prayer.

“O sad state  
Of human wretchedness ; so weak is man,  
So ignorant and blind, that did not God  
Sometimes withhold in mercy what we ask,  
We should be ruined at our own request.”

In the plan of God, faith-filled prayer is made a positive force in the universe. Many things are conditioned on such prayer :

“ More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of ; ”

and because this is so, it behooves him

## Prayer

who prays, to have a care how he employs  
that force which

—“ moves the Hand which moves the world.”

A man has no right to neglect prayer ; for neglecting prayer he loses the gain which right prayer brings : but employing prayer, he has need to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in giving direction to his longings, and he has no less need to ask God not to grant any foolish or sinful prayer which his foolish and sinful heart sends up.

At the holiday season, or at birthday times, many a parent asks his children to say just what they would like for a present. A child who has such a choice proffered to him is likely to recognize a responsibility along with its privilege; and commonly he hesitates among many things before he fixes on any one.

There are children, indeed, who have already learned the fallibility of their judgments, and who understand that that which now seems to them most desira-

## Perils of Prayer

ble may before long seem all unworthy of their cravings, and because of their distrust of their own judgments they ask their parents to choose for them in such a case. Again, there are children who are prompt to ask for something which ought to be denied them, and if their parents refuse to harm them by granting their requests, they incline to complain of the refusal. And these ways of our children are much like the ways of God's children—wise and foolish.

When we kneel in prayer, we have reason to consider well lest we pray amiss; lest our choice be of those things which are for our personal gratification, to consume upon our lusts, or according to our own poor judgment for those who are dear to us; and with all the confession of our present longings and desires there should be ever a sub-tone of entreaty to God not to give us our request if it would send leanness into our souls. Only in such a sense of the privileges and the perils of prayer is

## Prayer

there true wisdom, and is there true faith,  
in meeting the responsibilities of prayer :

“ If when I kneel to pray,

With eager lips I say :

‘ Lord, give me all the things that I desire ;  
Health, wealth, fame, friends, brave heart, religious  
fire,

The power to sway my fellow-men at will,  
And strength for mighty works to banish ill ; ’

In such a prayer as this,

The blessing I must miss.

“ Or, if I only dare

To raise this fainting prayer :

‘ Thou seest, Lord, that I am poor and weak,  
And cannot tell what things I ought to seek ;  
I therefore do not ask at all, but still  
I trust thy bounty all my wants to fill ; ’

My lips shall thus grow dumb,

The blessing will not come.

“ But if I lowly fall,

And thus in faith I call :

‘ Through Christ, O Lord, I pray thee give to me,  
Not what I would, but what seems best to thee,  
Of life, of health, of service, and of strength,  
Until to thy full joy I come at length ; ’

My prayer shall then avail,

The blessing will not fail.”

## XV

### Praying at Others

There is a familiar story of two boys at bedtime, which represents Tom as having said his prayers and clambered into bed, while Bill remains upon his knees at the bedside. Bill prays aloud: "O Lord, forgive Tom for being so unkind to me." "Bill! you stop that," cries out Tom from the bed. Bill continues to pray: "O Lord, make Tom a better boy." Tom says: "Bill, if you don't stop that kind o' praying, I'll punch your head for you." One more like petition from Bill brings Tom to the floor, and the boys' evening prayers end in a rough-and-tumble.

Now, whether this story is true or not in fact, it certainly is true in principle. It illustrates a truth which has its practical bearings in many a sphere of religious life. A great many persons pray after Bill's

## Prayer

fashion; and a great many others feel as Tom felt, on being prayed for, or on being prayed at, in this style. Prayer is often aimed at one's fellows instead of being offered up to the Hearer and Answerer of prayer; and the immediate effect of such prayer is not soothing or helpful to the minds of those prayed for.

As an illustration of this truth it may be said, that an advertisement was actually sent around, more or less widely, to the religious papers of the United States, asking the prayers of God's people in behalf of the pastor and other officials of a young church in a certain city who were persistently addicted to the habit of tobacco-using, much to the grief of the church-members who were now making this fact public. About the same time a faith-teaching religious periodical made, in its editorial columns, a specific charge of unfair dealing against a well-known religious publisher in another city, and wound up its series of denunciatory criticisms with a

## Praying at Others

request that the readers of the periodical would pray for the unworthy and wickedly dealing publisher.

Every once in a while we hear of some minister of a divided church praying in his pulpit for the forgiveness of his slanderers or persecutors, with more or less of particularity in explanation of the slanders and persecutions referred to. Those who are most familiar with church and social prayer-meetings know that it is by no means an unprecedented thing to hear prayers offered with an evident reference to some personal grievance in the petitioner's relations with his pastor or fellow-members.

Occasionally, indeed, when one brother has spoken on some mooted question in fact or doctrine, another brother, on the other side of the question, will rise, and "throw his remarks into the form of a prayer" in frank exhibit of the sad error of the one who has preceded him at the throne of grace. "O Lord, we know that thy feeling is very different from the feel-

## Prayer

ing of some of us on this subject. Thou knowest that those who are denounced here so positively this evening are thy faithful servants, approved of thee." This was the style in which one brother opened his prayer after another brother had spoken slightly of a prominent Christian denomination.

A chaplain in a legislative body sometimes misuses his office by praying at those in the assembly who take a different view of pending political or social questions from himself. This is thought by some to be a legitimate and desirable practice on a chaplain's part. On one occasion while a stringent prohibition measure was pending before a state legislature, a zealous advocate of it went to the chaplain just before he was to make the opening prayer for the day's session, and said in substance: "Put in your best licks at those other fellows in your prayer this morning. It will help to carry this thing through." He seemed to think that the chaplain's duty was to pray

## Praying at Others

at the opponents of prohibitory legislation, instead of praying to God that a right spirit might prevail among all the members.

It may be, indeed, that some Christians will say that they find in the Bible-teachings concerning prayer a warrant for this calling on God in their personal behalf against their enemies. They will, perhaps, refer to the imprecatory psalms as illustrations of this kind of praying. They will recall the injunction to "pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."

Possibly there are those who would be irreverent or unthinking enough to cite the fact that the dying Jesus prayed openly for the forgiveness of his murderers; as if our innocence, our sufferings, and our spirit, were to be held in comparison with his. But the difference in position between even David, the civil and religious head of Jehovah's peculiar people, in opposition to the avowed enemies of Jehovah as such, and an ordinary Christian minister or church-member in opposition to his

## Prayer

brethren or fellow-men, is a difference that would seem to require no illumination of spiritual vision for its discerning.

Old Thomas Fuller covered this point when he said: "Lord! when in my daily service I read David's psalms, give me to alter the accent of my soul, according to their several subjects. In such psalms wherein he confesseth his sins, or requesteth thy pardon, or praiseth for former or prayeth for future favors, in all these give me to raise my soul to as high a pitch as may be. But when I come to such psalms wherein he curseth his enemies, oh, there let me bring my soul down to a lower note; for those words were made only to fit David's mouth. Nor let me flatter myself, that it is lawful for me, with David, to curse thine enemies; lest my deceitful heart entitle all mine enemies to be thine, and so what was religion in David prove malice in me, whilst I act revenge under the pretense of piety."

As to praying *for* our enemies in the

## Praying at Others

closet, that is very different from praying at our enemies in public—in pulpit, or prayer-meeting, in the newspaper, or even aloud at the bedside of the one prayed for.

The root of the trouble with such prayers is the selfish element which predominates in them. They evidence a wrong conception of the relation of the petitioner and his God, and of the use of prayer as an agency of communication with God. It is quite too common for Christians to think chiefly of what God can do for them, instead of thinking of what they can do for God. They are readier to ask God's help against their enemies, than to proffer their help against God's enemies.

Absorbed in the thought of themselves, and of their enemies, and of their apparent needs, they ask God's help against those who oppose them, without stopping to consider whether *they* may not be in the wrong, and their enemies in the right; while all the while their prayer ought to be, that God would bring success to the

## Prayer

right, even though their plans should fail through God's success. They ask and they receive not, because they ask amiss, that they may consume it upon their lusts —that it may minister to their personal pleasure or advantage.

To assume to speak as if in God's name against one's mere personal opposers, is to assume a grave and fearful responsibility. To pray at another, to use prayer as a means of personal abuse or criticism, is to misuse one's position as a child of God, and so to misuse the name of God which that child has been privileged to bear. Against such a misuse of God's name, the commandment of God stands out in terrible explicitness : "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain : for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

## XVI

### **Loss through Unoffered Prayers**

Since it is clear, from the authority of God's word and from the lessons of God's providence, that positive good comes in response to specific prayer, it must be equally clear that the lack of such prayer causes the lack of such good. Prayer being a recognized force in the economy of the universe, the results which pivot on the exercise of that force are necessarily missing if the force be not exercised. Loss through unoffered prayers is as truly a fact as is gain through prayers proffered.

To many it seems as if simple non-doing could not be, in itself or in its consequences, as grievous a wrong as the commission of a sin of positive performance ; yet we are taught in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and the New, that not to do a plain duty is as offensive to God, and is

## Prayer

as sure to merit condemnation and punishing, as the doing of that which ought not to be done. One of the fiercest maledictions under the Old Covenant is recorded against a people who were simply inactive when they ought to have taken part in a pending contest. It is in the song of Deborah, after the battle of Israel with the Canaanites at Megiddo. Rehearsing the details of that contest, and praising those who were faithful, she cried out against the recreant non-doers :

“ Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord,  
Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof ;  
Because they came not to the help of the Lord,  
To the help of the Lord against the mighty.”

It was, again, the lips of the loving Jesus that taught the wickedness and guilt of non-doing, and foretold the terrible doom of those who did nothing more reprehensible than to do nothing. It was the man who simply kept his one pound wrapped in a napkin, instead of putting it at interest or using it in trade, who was

## **Loss through Unoffered Prayers**

called the "wicked servant," and from whom his treasure was taken away.

It was the man who merely failed to invest his talent at remunerative rates who was denounced as "wicked and slothful," and was to be stripped of his possessions, and cast, as an "unprofitable servant," into outer darkness, where there "shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." In the inspired description of the day of final account, the fearful doom pronounced by the Judge of all the earth against the lost is not based on the fact of their evil-doing, but on their evil non-doing. "Inasmuch as ye did it not," therefore "depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels."

Can there be any loss greater than the loss of one's very self for all eternity which results from simple non-doing when one ought to have done? This thought suggests the irreparable loss through unoffered prayers, in face of the fact that faith-filled prayers are a force in God's providential

## Prayer

plan, and that God's children are commanded to proffer them.

In the whole realm of nature, loss through non-action is quite as real and positive, and may, indeed, be quite as ruinous, as loss through actual wrong-doing. A man, by not reaping, not sowing, not plowing, may as truly lose a harvest as by setting fire to his standing grain; and neither drought nor frost, neither mildew nor locusts, can more surely be a cause of famine, among those dependent on the crop, than could be a simple neglect of processes which would in God's providence secure first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. A man's family can be as truly shelterless through his failure to build a house, or to buy or rent one, as by his turning them out of their home, and blowing up their dwelling with a charge of dynamite.

To fail to take needful food or drink, or to secure fresh air in a room filled with stifling gas, may be a means of as sure

## **Loss through Unoffered Prayers**

death to a man as a pistol or a razor employed for self-destruction. As with one's self, so with one's fellows. Simply to fail to reach out a hand to a drowning child, when within reach of him from the river bank, or to speak a word of warning to a blind man on the edge of a precipice, or to hold back a deaf one from stepping before a coming train, may bring on one's soul the blood of the man lost as truly as if he were deliberately murdered.

Neglecting to provide needed shelter, or food, or clothing, for a child, may cause its death. Neglecting to give it wise counsel or ample protection may result in that child's going astray to its ruin. Failing to pray for and with one's child day by day may be as culpable neglect as failing to give it material sustenance and ministry. Whatever is to be gained by prayer for one's self or for others may be utterly lost if that prayer be held back.

A man in mature life, who had for years stood well in the church and the commu-

## Prayer

nity, was arrested for forgery, and charged with various acts of embezzlement. His aged mother visited him in the jail. As she entered his cell, she fell on his neck in an outburst of tears. She had no word of reproach for him, but she reproached herself most bitterly. "My poor boy!" she cried out; "this is all my fault. I haven't been praying for you as I ought to. While you were a child I prayed for you constantly; and so all along, until I saw you in the church, active in Christ's service. Then I thought you safe, and I only thanked God for you in my prayers. Now you have been led astray, while I was neglecting to pray for you. Poor boy! poor boy! your old mother is to blame for it all."

Whatever may be thought of that mother's division of responsibility in the case of herself and her son, it is evident that she had a sense of loss through unoffered prayers; and who shall say that if that mother's prayers for the gracious upholding of her

## **Loss through Unoffered Prayers**

son had been ceaseless and full of faith, he might not have had his feet kept from falling. If a mother's prayers are potent for good, their lack may be a veritable loss. And there are other prayers than those of a mother that have power with God, and that cannot be neglected without loss.

He who fails to pray for God's protection as he sleeps, or for God's guidance as he wakes, omits to take a precaution for his safety that is as important as it is real. Why should he think he is not likely to have a resultant positive loss from that omission? If he does not pray for special wisdom and grace as he attempts to write or to speak, to teach or to pray, for the benefit of others, can he hope that his work will show the gain that it could have through such prayer? Can he hope that there will be no actual loss from his neglect? Blessings that are promised in response to faith-filled prayer cannot be expected if faith-filled prayer is not offered.

## Prayer

Loss stands over against gain in the neglect  
of the duty and privilege of prayer.

“ Heaven is the magazine wherein God puts  
Both good and evil ; prayer’s the key that shuts  
And opens this great treasure ; ‘tis a key  
Whose wards are Faith, and Hope, and Charity.  
Would’st thou prevent a judgment due to sin ?  
Turn but the key, and thou may’st lock it in.  
Or would’st thou have a blessing fall upon thee ?  
Open the door, and it will shower on thee.”

To fail of using wisely the key of prayer  
is to fail of guarding against the dreaded  
outflow of evil, and to fail of securing the  
desirable outflow of good.

There are those who are near us, and  
those whom we hold dear, who are suffering  
to-day from lack of blessings that would  
have been theirs had we done our duty  
in the proffer of faith-filled prayers in their  
behalf. We ourselves are losers in spirit-  
ual life and power through our failure to  
be instant and earnest in gaining blessings  
that are promised only in response to fit-  
ting and timely prayer. God forgive us for  
our lack and our loss ! Let us pray !

# ILLUSTRATIVE ANSWERS TO PRAYER



## Preface

If any are unwilling to believe that God hears the particular prayers of his trustful children, and is ready to grant them special answers, proportioned to their needs and their faith, these pages are not for them. These narrations are not offered as proof of the unprovable; they are not written to change the belief, or the non-belief, of unbelievers.

If, however, any are glad to be reassured, by the testimony of a brother believer and fellow-disciple, of the truth that our Father in heaven is as ready now as in Bible days to hear and to answer the prayers of his earthly children, according to their need and their faith, these pages are for them. These narrations are proffered as testimonies of one who knows whom he has believed, and who has had constant and repeated experience of his Father's un-

## Preface

varying love. They are offered in the hope that they will encourage and strengthen the faith of readers who do believe.

In a former volume, entitled "Prayer: Its Nature and Scope," I have given my views of prayer, its duty, its essential limitations, its privileges, its perils, and its comforts. In this volume I record some of my personal experiences, or the experiences of those whom I have known or known of, as illustrative of such prayer as God welcomes and honors on the part of those who feel their need of him, and who trust him according to his word. The two volumes really belong together, each being, in a sense, the complement of the other.

I send out this volume, like the other, with the prayer that God will bless it to its readers according as its teachings are sanctioned by his Word and Spirit.

H. C. T.

PHILADELPHIA,  
*June 8, 1900.*

## Contents

	PAGE
I EXPECTING ANSWERS TO PRAYER . . . . .	1
II BOYHOOD LESSONS OF TRUST IN GOD . . . .	5
III SLEIGHING THAT STRENGTHENED MY FAITH	11
IV KNOWING GOD'S VOICE WHEN HE SPEAKS .	19
V CHILDREN GUIDED ON A SCOTCH MOOR .	33
VI GOD DECIDING MY PLACE IN WAR TIME .	39
VII LED UNMISTAKABLY TO THE EDITOR'S CHAIR . . . . .	47
VIII GOD'S PROTECTION OF ONE'S GOOD NAME	57
IX GIVEN A TREASURE IN FRIEND AND HELPER . . . . .	65

## Contents

### X

	PAGE
TEACHING LESSONS OF TRUST TO MY HELPER . . . . .	75

### XI

TAUGHT LESSONS OF FAITH BY MY HELPER	81
--------------------------------------	----

### XII

GOD'S TENDERNESS WITH A DOUBTING TRUSTER . . . . .	89
---	----

### XIII

TRUSTING GOD RATHER THAN A CHILD OF GOD . . . . .	99
--	----

### XIV

SIMILAR EXPERIENCES BY PERSONAL FRIENDS . . . . .	105
--	-----

### XV

PRAYER OF A SOLDIER PRISONER AN- SWERED . . . . .	III
--	-----

### XVI

HOW GOD LED THE LEADERS IN THE CEN- TENNIAL EXHIBITION . . . . .	121
---	-----

### XVII

HELP IN THE NIGHT PRAYED FOR, AND SENT . . . . .	137
---	-----

# I

## Expecting Answers to Prayer

God is the same yesterday and to-day and forever. The Bible record abounds with illustrations of specific answers to explicit prayers by those who called upon God in their need, and who, in his service, were answered according to their needs and their trust.

The same God who gave answer to the prayers of Abraham and Jacob and Moses and Gideon and David and Elijah and Peter and Paul and Cornelius, according to the Bible record, is as ready to give answer, according to his promises, in our day as in theirs. A host of living witnesses can bear testimony to God's unvarying fidelity in this sphere of his universal sway.

All this is strictly within the operation of natural laws, as God sees and controls natural laws, although in finite man it re-

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

quires the eye of faith to perceive that the natural is subordinate continually to the supernatural. The trustful child of God can realize that, according to God's ordering, faith-filled prayer is as truly one of the providential forces in nature as is electricity; and that, in conformity with the letter and spirit of God's promises with reference to such prayer, the greater force may as truly operate, on occasions, for the advantage of a particular child of God, as does the lesser force when that child sends a personal message and receives a specific answer over the wires of the telegraph or of the long-distance telephone.

One who believes that the "laws of nature," by their very mention, presuppose the existence and control of an intelligent Lawgiver, cannot conceive of that Lawgiver as unable or unwilling to have his laws operate in particular providences, as well as in general, for the help of those who come to him in accordance with his specific directions. Reasonable men must

## **Expecting Answers to Prayer**

believe that God can control and direct his laws at least as well as man can control and direct laws which he makes. Therefore it is that so many of God's children come to their Father in faith-filled prayer, expecting to receive specific answers to their prayers, and are not disappointed.

Faith rests not on prayer, but on God. Prayer is merely one of the means of communicating with God; yet prayer is not the only means. Faith is more than reason, but faith is ever reasonable. As Dr. Mark Hopkins expressed it: "Faith takes God at his word, and surely that is reasonable. It is the most reasonable thing in the world to believe that God will do as he has promised." Such reasonable faith is the basis of all proper prayer.

God's specific promises of answer to faith-filled prayer, as given by Jesus Christ to his disciples, are none of them unconditional and absolute. All of them have well-defined limitations within their very

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

form and letter, which limitations are as important as the main promise itself. Yet, strange though this be, the limitations affixed to Christ's specific promises of answer to prayer are often ignored by his professed followers when they would seek or claim an answer to prayer; and because of this ignoring they wonder or doubt as to the uncertainty that seems to attach to the promise.<sup>1</sup>

The personal testimony borne in the following pages to God's fidelity to his promises in particular instances is offered, not to prove to doubters that God is ever as good as his word, but to confirm the faith of those who believe, and who are glad to have their imperfect trust confirmed.

<sup>1</sup> See *Prayer: Its Nature and Scope*, by same Author, for a treatment of "Prayer a Providential Force in God's Plan," "What to Pray for, and Why," "Limitations of the Right of Prayer," "Praying in Faith better than Faith in Prayer," "Mistaking Presumption for Faith," etc.

## II

### Boyhood Lessons of Trust in God

What can be firmer as the basis of a boy's intelligent faith in God than the explicit promises of his Father in heaven assured to him by a godly mother, and confirmed by her testimony as to that Father's readiness to make good his word in our day and sphere? Such a basis was given to me in my boyhood days by my mother, and that basis has not failed me from then until now.

Bible promises and Bible stories were told to me by my faithful and faith-filled mother before I had read them for myself; and they seemed all the truer to me because she said they were true, and surely I could never question or doubt my mother or my mother's words! Then she added to the sure promises of God her confident testimony of much that she had

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

known of God's willingness to hear and to answer the prayers of his children in their need and their faith, and she enjoined it on me to trust God ever accordingly. Thus I came to know and to trust Him who, in our dependence and need, is ready to minister to his children "as one whom his mother comforteth." One incident which my mother recited to me out of the experience of a neighbor of hers, impressed indelibly upon my mind the truth that God is, in our day, the God of the widow and the fatherless, as ready to hear and to answer faith-filled prayers as he was in the days of Elijah and Elisha.

My boyhood's home was on the New England seacoast, at a point where Long Island Sound opens into the Atlantic Ocean. Seventy-five or a hundred years ago there was, in a New England village, no such wide distance between the rich and the poor as nowadays there is in many a prosperous community. Few families had household servants. Servants, indeed, were

## Boyhood Lessons of Trust in God

not then known there as a class. Families who were "better off" than their neighbors were accustomed to call on the women and girls of those neighbors to act as "help" in household work, such as washing and baking and house-cleaning and sewing and nursing. Men and boys who were not in any particular trade, or who were not on the water as sailors or coasters, were accustomed to do service for their well-to-do neighbors as "help" in planting and harvesting and wood-chopping, and other odd jobs. Thus, while most were enabled to get along day by day moderately well, there was at times a family where a widow and her fatherless children, or others, would, through special circumstances, be pressed for means of support beyond the knowledge of their neighbors.

Such a family lived not far from my mother and grandmother, in a house often pointed out to me as I heard the story afterward. The mother and her two children served and trusted God, and did the

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

best they could for themselves, as they found opportunity, in doing such work as their neighbors could furnish them. But at one time the mother found herself in extremity. As a stormy night shut in she had not a particle of food for the next day's need. When they lay down that night, she prayed with her children, without telling them of her helplessness—for, indeed, she was not helpless while she trusted God as her helper. With the new, bright morning the mother prayed for their daily bread, assured that her Father could supply it—as he alone knew how.

She asked her children to go down to the shore before breakfast, and get some clean sand from the beach for their sitting-room floor. Before the days of woolen carpets, in the humbler New England homes they were accustomed to strew sand on the floor, and to ornament the borders by arranging it in figures with a broom. When the children had gone, the mother again kneeled and prayed for their daily

## Boyhood Lessons of Trust in God

bread. After this she spread the breakfast-table, for which she had no food.

Suddenly the children returned without the sand, but bringing gleefully a fine fish, which they had found in a hollow of the beach, as left by the outgoing tide after the storm, and which they together had captured. As with a grateful heart she thanked God for his goodness, and began to prepare the fish for their breakfast, she was called to the door by a visitor.

A man from the country above the village had called to say that on one occasion her husband, now dead, had done some work for this man for which he had not been paid. The man had now brought a bushel and a half of corn-meal to give the widow on account, promising to bring more by and by. As with swelling heart the mother thanked the donor, and brought the meal into their now doubly glad home, she told the children of how God had answered her prayer, and they kneeled together to give him thanks.

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

Then she hastily made a "johnny-cake" of the Indian-meal, and baked it by the fire, while she broiled the fish for their breakfast. Together they asked God's blessing on that God-given meal, and thenceforward they served and trusted God more fully and joyously than ever.

The village neighbors, when they learned of God's care of one whom they had unintentionally neglected, resolved henceforth to minister more faithfully to her whom God had privileged to represent him in their community. When I heard that story from my dear mother, it didn't seem any more strange, or any less true, than the Bible stories. Indeed, it didn't seem so very strange anyway. It seemed just like God. And I think so still. I've never had reason to think differently.

### III

## Sleighting that Strengthened my Faith

When, in my young manhood, I came openly and actively into God's special service, the faith side of my nature was stronger than the love side. Had I been always as ready and willing to enter on and continue in the path of duty as I was to recognize the fact that God called me to do this, and that he was ready to sustain me in it, I should have been a better child of God in all these years. What I now testify to, therefore, is that God was ever ready to give me guidance and help in answer to prayer, not that I was always willing to be guided of God, and to serve him faithfully.

My first special work in God's service, when I had newly consecrated myself to him, in the spring of 1852, was as the

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

superintendent of the Morgan Street Mission School in Hartford, Connecticut, just then started among the poor and the vicious, in an old rickety building near the river side. I had been called to that work by a summons as unexpected and as positive as that which Elijah gave to Elisha when he took him from his plow; and I had no more reason than had Elisha to doubt that it was God's wish for the called layman to enter his special service just then and there.

My very first address to the little band of workers, in that garret-room mission school, was based on the words of Jesus, as recorded in Mark 11 : 22-25: "Have faith in God. . . . Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." This was before I had been chosen to the superintendency of the school, and, as I afterwards learned, it was one of the reasons that led to my call to that position. At all events, I early found

## **Sleighbing that Strengthened my Faith**

myself recognized by the teachers as a firm believer in God's readiness to hear and answer faith-filled prayer, now as of old. This laid upon me a special responsibility for practicing as I preached among that band of young workers for Christ. And an unsought and unexpected occasion arose for putting my belief to a test before them.

Early in the history of our school one of our larger boys was sent to the state prison for setting fire to an old building in the neighborhood in order to bring out the volunteer fire department with which he was connected. As others of our larger boys might be counted as, in a sense, candidates for the state prison, we were desirous of making use of this unfortunate occurrence as a warning to our charge. When, later, a Christmas celebration was talked of, we had this matter to consider in connection with our movements.

As a band of teachers we came together and prayed earnestly for special guidance

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

in our plans. We asked God particularly to show us what we should do on the coming Christmas to enable us to impress our pupils for good while they were in our charge. Then, after consultation, we decided to arrange a sleigh-ride for all hands, on Christmas morning, to Wethersfield, a few miles below Hartford. After passing through the several prison departments there, we would have a meeting in the prison chapel, with fitting addresses and warnings. Returning to Hartford at noon, we would give the pupils a dinner in the old City Hall, which we had obtained consent to use for the day. This plan met with the approval of all, and we proceeded with our necessary arrangements.

We had several meetings to complete the details, and at each of these we renewedly prayed for guidance. One evening a teacher abruptly suggested that possibly there would be no snow on Christmas, and, if so, all our plans would come to nought. Inexperienced as we

## Sleighing that Strengthened my Faith

were in such matters, this possibility had not been considered by us. Quite a number of the teachers were startled.

In this emergency I ventured to say, without a thought of presumption, that, as we were in God's special service, and had been asking his guidance in our plans, we might confidently trust God for his part in the program for Christmas Day, and, as the weather was at his control, we need not doubt him concerning it.

"Oh, well!" spoke out one of the teachers; "if Mr. Trumbull will agree to furnish the snow for sleighing, we can safely go ahead with our arrangements."

"Mr. Trumbull doesn't propose to furnish the snow for sleighing on Christmas," I answered promptly. "He only suggests that, as we have been led of God to make plans in God's service, where snow for sleighing is a necessity, it seems to be a distrust of God to suggest that, while we do our part as God directs, he may not do his part."

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

At this we went on with our arrangements. It is to be borne in mind in this narration that I am by no means defending my course in this matter as a wise or a proper one, but that I am simply recording God's loving dealings with me in his service when I emphasized, however unwisely, the importance of trusting God to give an answer to our faith-filled prayers in his service.

When I went home from the meeting of teachers that evening, I realized the responsibility of my position in this emergency. Accordingly I went on my knees before God to call for guidance and help. I told God that if I had unintentionally erred in what I had said about the sleighing, I now prayed that the tender faith of those young teachers, whom I was set to lead in his service, might not be harmed through any error or presumption of mine. And from the evening I prayed, day by day, that we might be helped, through his leading, to a firmer faith in him.

## Sleighbing that Strengthened my Faith

As Christmas drew near there were still no signs of snow. Yet we went on with our arrangements, as if we were sure of good sleighing. Repeatedly I checked attempts at discussion over the prospects of the weather as a matter outside of our control. On Christmas Eve we met for the last preliminary conference, and then we separated for the night with an agreement to meet at the school-room the next morning. At my home, as I looked out of my window before retiring, I saw a clear star-lit sky, but I knew that my Father was back of the sky and stars, and, committing the whole case to him trustfully, I lay down and slept.

Christmas morning I rose to find some four inches of snow on the ground,—a good basis for excellent sleighing. The sun was shining. I thanked God heartily, and prepared for the day. Everything passed off as we had hoped. We had our sleigh-ride to Wethersfield and our impressive service in the state-prison chapel.

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

We came back in the middle of the day to have our dinner for the pupils in the old City Hall. When we entered that hall the snow was already melting on the ground. When we came out from that hall, after several hours there, the snow had practically disappeared; and, when the night shut in, the ground was again bare.

Those teachers felt that God had sent that snow to enable us to use it for his service as we had planned and prayed under his guidance. I have never had any doubt on that point.

More than forty years after that day one of the most prominent of those teachers, who had ever since been active in God's service, recalled gratefully that God-sent Christmas snowstorm, as we were together in the Adirondacks, and she spoke earnestly of the aid it had been to her faith at the time and thenceforward until now. I have never ceased to thank my loving Father for the aid he thus gave to the faith of those teachers, and to my faith.

## IV

### **Knowing God's Voice when he Speaks**

If prayer includes as one of its privileges *communion* with God, it follows that God has a part in this communion, as well as man. If a child of God confidently asks guidance from his Father, the Father may be expected to respond to the child with the special guidance sought. This seems a reasonable expectation on the child's part, and an expectation that seems justified by God's explicit teaching to his children, in both the Old Testament and the New. In all the ages God's most trustful children have felt that they could expect explicit direction in response to prayer, and multitudes of them have been ready to bear witness that they have not been disappointed.

God promised his people by the prophet Isaiah, as they had need and sought his

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

help, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isa. 30 : 21.) Again God promised by his apostle James, "If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed" (James 1 : 5, 6).

These promises I, like many another, early recognized as assured of God, and I was encouraged by them. Yet I knew that many had permitted themselves to be misled through not interpreting these promises aright, and I had to admit that one might fall into grievous error and unjustifiable excesses through fanaticism or folly, even while he supposed he was following God's literal counsel. I even saw that I was sometimes inclined to follow an impulse or an unreasonable impression as

## **Knowing God's Voice when he Speaks**

to my personal duty, when I really desired to act as God directed. Therefore I questioned in my mind whether I was being misled by an uncertain sound in my spiritual ears, and, if so, how this could be avoided.

While I was speaking of this subject, one day, with a friend known and prized from my boyhood, the Rev. Dr. Henry M. Parsons, then of Springfield, later of Boston and of Buffalo and of Toronto, he said to me suggestively: "Henry, it's a great thing to know the Lord's voice when he speaks to us, and not to mistake anything else for it." That utterance started me on a new train of thought, and I began to consider the limitations within which alone I might properly expect to hear God's voice directing me. These recognized limits have helped me ever since to exclude what might otherwise have been a cause of my frequent misleading.

**In the first place, we have no right to**

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

seek special guidance from God when our plain duty for the hour is already pointed out in the teachings of his Word, or in the circumstances of our position or relations. We need not ask God whether we shall love our parents or our children, or be good citizens, or give help to those who need it, and who apply to us for what we have to give. Nor need we ask God to tell us whether we are to work or to sleep or to eat or to take exercise at proper hours. If escaping gas fouls the atmosphere of a close room, we ought to know that opening a window to the fresh air is our duty, without waiting for any new revelation from God. Only within reasonable limits, and then where we are otherwise unable to know just in what way we are to act, is it proper for us to ask God's added and special help and guidance in our sphere.

In the next place, it is evident that God will never contradict himself. Having laid down in his Word well-defined principles for our guidance, God will never call on us

## **Knowing God's Voice when he Speaks**

to act otherwise than in accordance with those principles. "God is not a God of confusion," but of order and of peace. Where our duty is already clear, we may be sure that nothing is from God that would tempt us to do differently. This shuts out all wrong-doing as possibly directed of God.

Then, again, no call can be from God when it would seemingly summon us to a new duty while we are already in the discharge of a particular duty in God's providence with which the new task would conflict. Thus, for example, if we had left our home to summon the doctor for a sick member of our family, we might know that God would not call us on the way to turn aside and visit a needy neighbor in order to give sympathy or help. God is never in such extremity that he has to call one child of his to two conflicting duties,—if, indeed, duties ever do conflict.

The limitations indicated by such guarding principles as these practically shut out

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

most of the difficulties which might lead one amiss in supposing that a guiding voice came from God in answer to special prayer. In all the years that followed this decision I have had little hesitation in accepting God's voice as God's voice, while I have had frequent occasion to hear and to heed that voice in little matters and in greater. I give a few illustrations out of many that I might give as showing how good it is to know God's voice and to conform to its teachings.

I was at work at my library table in Hartford one evening. I had just finished a piece of work for a Sunday-school magazine in Chicago. I had definitely promised the article, and it must be mailed that evening in order to be on time. I was, moreover, to leave home on the midnight train for Boston in order to fill an important religious appointment on the next day. As I was folding my finished Chicago manuscript I was startled by hearing a cry of pain from my wife in the room above

## **Knowing God's Voice when he Speaks**

me. Starting from my seat, I bounded upstairs to my wife's assistance. She had burned her hand slightly with a spirit-lamp. Having assisted her in its treatment, I returned to my library; but my finished manuscript was not to be found.

After searching the table and the floor for it, I went upstairs again to see if by any possibility I had taken it with me, or dropped it on the way. Then I searched my eight or ten pockets, thinking that I might have slipped it into one of these as I sprang at the cry of pain. But still it was not to be found. The time approached for my start for Boston. The manuscript for Chicago must be mailed before I left. I was in extremity, and I realized it. So I dropped on my knees at my study table, and called on God for help.

I am accustomed at such a time to state fully the case to my God, as if to convince myself that I am not shirking any duty, but am doing as I am entitled to do in his service. I told God that all this had

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

occurred while I was at work as his child. The manuscript was for him; so was my jumping to my wife's relief, so also was my purposed trip to Boston. Moreover, I had exhausted my efforts to recover the paper, which must be found at once. He could help me. What should I do? At once there came the familiar voice to me, or the mental impression as if a voice had said:

"Stand up, and throw off your coat and vest."

No explanation was added. I asked for none, but instantly I did as I was directed. As my vest was turned back I discovered the missing manuscript in a pocket in the inner lining of that vest, which I had not before known was there. Without stopping even to wonder over the incident I dropped again on my knees, and gave God thanks for his goodness; then I hurried on my way to Boston, mailing the paper as I went.

A little subsequent thought made the probable course of events clear to my

## **Knowing God's Voice when he Speaks**

mind, yet without lessening the importance of God's special ministry in it all. My coat had been buttoned over my vest as I rose from my chair at the call for help in the upper room. I had instinctively attempted to put the paper into the right breast-pocket of my coat. Unintentionally, I had slipped it inside the vest as well as the coat, and it had entered the pocket of which I was not aware. Up to that time I had never known of such a pocket, although I afterwards found that such pockets were common.

While this was all within the realm of the natural, I was none the less helpless to find the missing paper within the time allowed me; and I needed God's supernatural oversight of the natural in order to enable me to do my duty for him in my little sphere. And he came to my relief with his guiding voice, as he is ever ready to do for his children, according to their need and their faith.

At another time, I was one day making

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

arrangements to leave my Hartford home, in the evening, for a long trip to the North and West, in the line of my Sunday-school evangelistic work. I called at the bank, and drew a sum of money sufficient for my expenses while absent. I attended to various other matters at different places. Near the close of the day, at my home, I desired to use a portion of the money I had drawn, but, to my surprise, I could not find it. In vain I tried to recall where I had put it. I remembered taking it from the teller, at his window, but all after that was a blank in my mind with reference to it. I had been at various points in the city, and I had been in different parts of my house; but I knew of no one place more than another where I might hope to find the missing money.

In my extremity I asked, on my knees, for God's help. I told him that this money was his, and that I had not intentionally been careless with reference to it. I could not find it, nor did I know where to look.

## Knowing God's Voice when he Speaks

Would he direct me? At once the word came:

"Go down the kitchen stairs, and look on the cellar floor."

Rising, and doing as directed, I found the roll of bank-notes on the cellar floor, near the foot of the stairs. I thanked God for his goodness, and determined to be more careful the next time in putting any money I drew from the bank in a safe place at the start.

How the roll of notes came to be where I found it, I do not know, nor was it for me to explain; it may be that I put the money loosely in my vest-pocket when I received it from the teller, and that it remained there until it slipped out, as I went down the kitchen stairs in my going about the house. All was, I suppose, in the line of natural laws supernaturally controlled for the good of a trustful child of God. This again is but one instance out of many of God's loving dealings with me, for which I am profoundly grateful.

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

Nor is it in matters of material things only that we can have God's guiding voice in our need. In things spiritual, also, we are privileged to commune with God and be helped. God is as ready to give comfort or salvation to a trusting soul as he is to give help and direction to one who looks for lost treasure. And with God there is no such measure as with man as to things great or small, easy or difficult. Of this also I have had rich experience, and to this I bear glad testimony.

For example, at one time I found myself disturbed and worried over a strange temptation in my thoughts. It hindered me in my reading, in my writing, and in my thinking. I could not shut it out from my mind, try I never so earnestly. Yet I could not see how I was directly responsible for its constant presence with me. I wanted to get away from it, or to get it away from me.

In my dilemma, after several days of struggling, I called on God for special help,

## **Knowing God's Voice when he Speaks**

or I communed with him in my perplexity. I asked God why I should have this special trouble, when I wanted my mind free for his assigned work in my sphere. I asked if he would not interpose and give me relief. Could he not take that temptation away? At once there came this unexpected response:

“Of course, I can instantly relieve you from this struggle. But which would you prefer,—to keep on with this fight for victory over the temptation in the strength that I will give you, and be the gainer in true manhood through the struggle, or to be wholly relieved at once from the conflict, and be so much less of a man in consequence?”

When that was the issue before me, I called out to God earnestly: “Let me be no less of a man than I am. If that be the choice, let this fight go on, and I be the gainer, in thy strength, through it all.”

Yet, strange to say, from that moment I had no more trouble with that temptation.

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

Perhaps it was because I had now learned the lesson God would teach me by it, and other lessons were to be taught me in other ways. How good God is, and how tender and considerate with his children in their weakness and their needs, as they come to him in communing prayer!

## V

### *Children Guided on a Scotch Moor*

Although in these narrations I naturally emphasize my personal experience of God's loving guidance in answer to prayer, this is not because I feel that I have had such guidance above others of my acquaintance. Indeed, as illustrated by my mother's neighbor, the needy widow of whom I tell, for whom God made such remarkable provision in her extremity, God's ministry to others of his children whom I have personally known, or have known of, has, along my life course, strengthened my faith in him as ready to do for me according to my need and faith. And as their testimony has tended to give me cheer, I gladly give my testimony, in the hope that it will give others cheer. If all who have been thus providentially ministered to should bear

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

their testimony, the world would ring anew with the praises of God's goodness.

On one occasion this subject of explicit answers to specific prayer came up for consideration in the Hartford Ministers' Meeting, at its weekly session, on Monday morning, when I was present. There were great and grand and good men in that gathering. I wish that the personal testimonies given that morning could have been preserved for the comfort of the saints. Prominent among these testimonies I recall particularly the impressive words of Professor Calvin E. Stowe, Dr. Horace Bushnell, Dr. Robert Turnbull, and Dr. Nathaniel J. Burton, all long since passed to their reward. The incident related out of his boyhood experience by Dr. Turnbull I repeat as more directly in the line of my present thought, that God is ready to give sought-for guidance, by his directing voice or otherwise, according to his trusting child's need.

**Dr. Robert Turnbull, the distinguished**

## Children Guided on a Scotch Moor

author and preacher, of Philadelphia, Boston, and Hartford, did not remove to America until he was nearly twenty-five years old. It was while he was still a little boy in his Scottish home that the incident occurred of which he told us that memorable Monday morning.

On a wintry day Robert and his little sister strayed out from their home for a walk on the moor. As it drew toward dark, on the short winter's day, a driving snowstorm came on. Soon the children were blinded and dazed by the chilly storm. With no well-defined road over the moor, and with all landmarks shut out from sight by the falling snow, the children were soon bewildered. As they looked about them, and turned from side to side in search of the way, they quickly lost all knowledge of the points of compass, and were helpless as to the direction they should take. They realized that they had lost their way, and they dared not move in any direction. Yet these were children

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

who had been taught that their Father in heaven could help them.

"Robbie, let us pray," said the sister; and they dropped together on their knees on the snowy moor, as if in their home bedroom.

"We only knew 'the Lord's Prayer,'" said Dr. Turnbull, as he told the story; "and we said that prayer together. But God knew that we really meant, 'Please show us the way home;' and he answered us accordingly.

"As we rose from our knees and peered about through the driving snow, my sister, keener-eyed in her faith, called out gaily: 'There's Old Maggie, Robbie. She'll show us the way.' And we sprang forward toward her, calling out as we pressed on, 'Maggie, Maggie!'"

"Old Maggie," said the narrator, "was a humble neighbor, and in a sense a dependent of ours, who was often at our house to perform service or to receive supplies. There she was just before us now in

## Children Guided on a Scotch Moor

the driving snow, breasting the storm, with her plaid about her. As we called to her she did not look back, but pressed on, while we with our tired little feet followed after as best we could, glad of her safe lead. But suddenly Old Maggie disappeared. Bewildered again, we stopped and looked about us in the snow. To our wonder and delight, there just before us was our dear home which we were seeking. Maggie was gone. Her mission for now was performed. God had used her lead to answer our prayer that he would show us the way home."

As we looked into the Christ-lighted face of good Dr. Turnbull when he bore this testimony, we all felt that it was no mere fancy of the brain that had misled him. It was but an added evidence of God's goodness to his trustful children in their need, and we were glad that we also had such a loving Father. The impression of that recital has been with me ever since in all these years. And now, as the close

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

of life's wintry day comes on, and the  
snows of age dim my eyes, I am glad of  
my confidence that my Father will not  
leave his child without a guide until I am  
finally in the place which he has prepared  
for me and for mine.

## VI

### God Deciding my Place in War Time

From the time when I first consciously gave myself to God's service, in my young manhood, I have never had reason to doubt, at any given time, that God wanted me to serve him in the place where I then was. Or, if he wanted me to enter a new field of service, he made that as plain to me as if he had spoken out of the heavens in thunder tones telling me where to go next. This has, of course, been a comfort to me in my life work, for which I am profoundly grateful. Such rest of faith as to one's sphere of service is, I believe, open to every child of God who seeks it in a sense of dependence and of confident trust.

Far be it from me to claim or to suggest that I have always felt that I was doing just right, or that I was uniformly even

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

trying to do so. Many, very many, times I have failed, and known that I was failing, to do the best I could. I have not always even tried to do my best. This I have to confess; but, on the other hand, I have not had occasion, at such times, to doubt as to what and where was my sphere of duty in which I ought to be doing my best, or trying to do so.

The most desirable spot in the universe for a child of God is ever the spot where God wants that child to be. That point made clear to the child, he ought to feel that he would not gain, either in honor or in profit, by a change from where he is to another spot, whether it be to tend a cabbage field, to open up a diamond mine, or to evangelize a continent. God knows best what *he* wants, and what *we* ought to want. As to this, let us never have any doubt.

Hardly had I taken the step of formally entering God's service, when an unmistakable call from God, as I have already narrated, summoned me to superintend a

## God Deciding my Place in War Time

city-mission school. From that time to the present every successive change of field for me has been as distinctly pointed out of God as was that first sphere of service. The indications of my duty and God's wish at the turning-point have been sometimes as remarkable as they were explicit. Some of these are worthy of recall in this recital of illustrative experiences of God's special guidance.

At the opening of the Civil War by the firing on Fort Sumter, in April, 1861, I was in active work in the Sunday-school missionary field in New England, to which I had been clearly called of God. The new emergency, in the summons to defend the government in its peril, seemed to me, as to most of the loyal able-bodied citizens of the North, to be a providential call to enlist in the army. But, unfortunately, I was not supposed to be an able-bodied citizen. I was in frail health, worn down by nervous effort in much traveling and speaking.

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

When Governor Buckingham offered me the position of major in one of the earlier three years' regiments, and I referred the question of my physical fitness for the place to my physician, the latter assured me that my accepting it was quite out of the question. He said I could not live six weeks in army service. A younger and stalwart brother of mine, who had already enlisted, said that I could not live a single week in active service. He added that my accepting the position would only tend to keep out of it a man who could fill it. Thus I seemed shut out from army service by my physical incapacity.

In view of my prominence as a Sunday-school worker and lay preacher, the officers of the Tenth Connecticut Regiment, when it was making ready for the field, proposed to me to go as their chaplain; but, on taking counsel, I felt that that also was beyond my strength. In view of all the difficulties, therefore, I had to content myself with urging others to enlist, as I could

## God Deciding my Place in War Time

not, and to this work I devoted myself enthusiastically. Of course, I was available in *this* line, at such a time, as an able-bodied speaker would not be. If any one whom I urged to enlist asked me why I did not myself volunteer, I was ready to reply that I would go at once if the government would accept me. Therefore my appeal came with greater force to others to do likewise. In this sphere, as a consequence, I had, for the time, plenty to do. Yet I regretted all the time that I was unfitted for more active service when such pressure was on all, and this feeling grew on me constantly. I was renewedly asking myself whether indeed it would not be possible for me to have some other share in the paramount duty of the loyal citizen in that crisis. This was not in the way of chafing under God's ordering, but it was in the way of dutifully inquiring just what God would have me to do with my limits as they were.

In the summer of 1862, after the terrible fighting in the seven days' battles before

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

Richmond, and the new call was made for volunteers to replace losses in McClellan's army, the pressure on me was greater than before. One Saturday evening I returned to my home exhausted after a vigorous campaign through the towns of Hartford and Tolland counties, where I had accompanied Colonel Dwight Morris, of Bridgeport, commander of the new Fourteenth Regiment, appealing for volunteers.

Although it was near midnight when I reached home, instead of retiring to my room for sleep, I stopped in my parlor below stairs, and sat before the Lord for a season of communing with him. My own earnest appeals that evening to others to count their country's imperative call for help in its life struggle to be limited in their case only by their possibility of service, came back on my mind at this hour with tremendous force. I asked God earnestly if there was not something more that I could do in view of that summons.

In response the Lord seemed to ask me

## God Deciding my Place in War Time

whether it did not seem decided that I lacked the physical ability to serve in either the field or line in the army. I said it did, but I had come to question more and more whether I might not do something as a chaplain or as a lay Christian worker in camp or hospital, even if I might not in more active service.

At this the Lord pointed me to the remark made by Colonel Morris that very evening as to the surplus of applicants for a chaplain's commission at the present time. He had told me that some thirty clergymen had applied to him for an appointment as chaplain. Therefore there was no special call on me to proffer my service in that line just now. But, I suggested, an unsolicited call had come to me a year ago from the officers of the Tenth Connecticut Regiment to be their chaplain. "Yes, but that regiment now has a chaplain. If the place proffered you a year ago were again before you, you might indeed count its acceptance a duty, but in the lack of such

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

a call you must be contented as you are." And with this conclusion I had to rest the case at issue, and retire for the night.

Sunday, with its duties, followed that night. On Monday morning the first mail delivery brought me a letter from New Berne, North Carolina. It was from the colonel of the Tenth Connecticut Regiment, saying that their chaplain had resigned, and he now again proffered the position to me. He spoke of the needs of his regiment and of the military post where it was now stationed, and he suggested reasons why I should accept the call. The providence was too marked to leave me in any doubt as to God's purpose for me. From my library chair I called to my wife in the room above:

"Alice, God has called me to the war."

"Then I suppose you'll go" was the quiet response of the brave and patriotic and self-denying little woman.

And this was the way that God pointed out my place in army service.

## VII

### Led Unmistakably to the Editor's Chair

When I entered army service I was, and for four years I had been, in the service of the American Sunday School Union as the Sunday-school missionary for Connecticut. During my three years' absence in the army I was still counted as a representative of that society among the soldiers at the front. On my return I was appointed to the oversight of its missionary work in the New England field. Later I was appointed its Normal Secretary, in charge of its teacher-training work throughout the entire country.

The work of traveling from Maine to California, and from Minnesota to Florida, holding institutes and conventions and conferences, with an almost limitless amount of public speaking, became severely tax-

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

ing to me. Naturally I began to question in my mind whether I could continue work of this kind as the years passed on, or whether I could do better work of another sort for a longer time by my undertaking labors like those of a writer or an editor at some center of influence. But, as to this, God knew better than I did, and I must leave it to him to indicate his will. Moreover, I was not by any means sure that I had the qualifications for such a place as that which I thought of. That also I must leave to God's decision and guidance.

In the early spring of 1875, just as I was leaving home to conduct an extended Sunday-school institute in Toronto, Canada, I heard that Mr. John Wanamaker, of Philadelphia, had purchased *The Sunday School Times*, and was seeking some well-known Sunday-school worker to secure as its editor. At once I questioned in my mind whether that were not a place that I should be fitted for, and in which I might hope to do my better life service. As I had known

## **Led Unmistakably to the Editor's Chair**

Mr. Wanamaker for years, it occurred to me that, if he knew that I would be willing to leave Hartford, he might invite me to come to Philadelphia and edit his paper. But for me to suggest such a thought to him would be like telling the Lord where I would like to be before he had indicated his purpose, and that would be contrary to my life principles of service; therefore I left for Canada in the line of my legitimate service, having prayerfully committed all my interests to the Lord trustfully.

Returning to Hartford after an absence of two weeks, I found awaiting me a letter from Mr. Wanamaker asking if I would consider a proposition to remove to Philadelphia and become editor of The Sunday School Times. Mr. Wanamaker said that, if I would do this, he would like to have me visit Philadelphia at his expense for a conference on the subject. I accepted this letter, not as an indication that I was to be in this new field of labor, but that I was to consider the proposal carefully. Accord-

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

ingly I so wrote to Mr. Wanamaker, and afterwards visited him.

Before I could listen to any formal proposition to assume a new charge, I must be sure that I could discharge all obligations already assumed or under consideration between myself and other parties. As Mr. Wanamaker was soon to leave for Europe for an absence of several months, he wanted me to undertake the editorial work at once. That, I told him, was impossible, as we were arranging for an International Sunday-school Convention, and I was chairman of the Executive Committee, and could not abandon that work while it was incomplete.

He was then ready to waive the question of time. Several other questions were subsequently, one by one, disposed of. This required repeated visits to Philadelphia. Everything thus far seemed to indicate God's purpose of leading me into the new field; but until I was sure that there was no existing duty as a barrier to my enter-

## Led Unmistakably to the Editor's Chair

ing the field, I declined even to consider the question of pecuniary or other compensation involved, lest I should be unduly influenced in my mind by the thought of this. And now comes the story of the most striking interposition of Providence as furthering the settlement of the preliminaries in the case.

As I was one morning leaving Philadelphia for New York, in the course of these prayerful conferences, Mr. Wanamaker asked me:

“What now stands in the way of your decision?”

“I must see two other persons,—one of them in New York, the other in Boston.”

“Why not go at once and see them?”

“Because I have an important committee meeting in Hartiod the day after tomorrow,” I replied; “and I must be at that meeting.”

“Well,” said Mr. Wanamaker, “then we must wait, and hope for things to work out.”

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

On my way to Hartford, as I entered a car at the Grand Central Station in New York, to my surprise I saw the New York man whom I said I could not stop to meet. He represented a prominent national religious society that wished me to superintend a department of its evangelistic work. I had promised to consider this carefully, and I wanted to learn from him the details that would enable me to know what was my duty. He was in the next seat to mine on the way to New Haven. Sitting down by him, I entered into conversation, and obtained the desired information without telling him of my purpose, and was convinced that my duty was not in that direction. Before we reached New Haven the first barrier of which I spoke to Mr. Wanamaker was removed.

When I rose the next morning, I prayed earnestly over my important duties of the day in Hartford, and asked that the Lord would give me further light as to The Sunday School Times matter. My next

## Led Unmistakably to the Editor's Chair

desire as to this was to see my Boston friend, Mr. Thomas C. Evans. Yet there were two points in connection with my committee meeting, and another interest for the day, that burdened my mind as I prayed. It seemed as though the Lord counseled me, "Go down town, and do the best you can there, and leave the rest to me."

All went well at the committee meeting. The points of difference which I had feared would cause trouble were settled satisfactorily to all, and soon after noon I returned to my house grateful for the day's results so far.

As I entered the door of my house, to my great surprise I saw through the open parlor door my friend Evans of Boston sitting inside. He had never before entered my house, nor had he now any reason to suspect my special desire for an interview with him. In my amazement I called out to him, as I entered the room :

"Tom Evans, what brought you here

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

to-day?—or, rather, what do you think brought you? I *know*, but I would like to know what you *think*."

"Well, that's the queer thing about it, Clay," he responded. "Last night I was at my brother's home in Shelburne Falls, above Greenfield, Massachusetts. This morning I started for my home by the way of Springfield. Just as I was starting [that was about the time I was praying over the case] a strong impression was borne in upon my mind, 'Go down to Hartford and see Clay Trumbull.' I said to myself, 'I've nothing to see him for, and it will take me out of my way and delay my return home.' Again the impression came, 'Go down to Hartford and see Clay Trumbull.' So I came, and here I am."

"That is right," I said; "and now I'll tell you what you came for."

Evans was a friend and old army comrade. He knew much about newspapers and their business side, and I wanted to have his counsel on several points before I

## **Led Unmistakably to the Editor's Chair**

could decide on such a change in my life occupation as I was now considering. Therefore it was that I was so anxious to see him. With that afternoon's talk with Evans the last preliminary obstacle to my considering Mr. Wanamaker's proposition was removed, and I wrote him accordingly.

Soon an arrangement was made by which I became sole editor and part owner of The Sunday School Times, and my son-in-law, John D. Wattles, became the business manager and a part owner of the paper. Two years later we two purchased Mr. Wanamaker's interest in the business, and we had entire control. And this was the way in which I was led of God, step by step, to the editor's chair, for my work in the last third of a busy life.

When, in July, 1875, I, with my family, left Hartford for Philadelphia, I said confidently to my wife :

"Alice, if future events should seem to show that I have wrecked my business prospects, and even my reputation, by going

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

to Philadelphia, I want you to know that I was sure, when I left Hartford, that God wanted me to go there. Whether I personally am to gain or lose by the move, *God* knows. That God clearly indicated his wish for me to make the move, *I* know. The result I am glad to leave with God."

That's a good way to feel about any and every move in God's service. In fact, it is the only right way for a child of God to feel.

## VIII

### God's Protection of One's Good Name

My friend, Hon. E. A. Rollins, who was Commissioner of Internal Revenue in "Reconstruction Days," after the Civil War, told me of an incident in his experience that emphasized the truth which I now confirm by a recital of an experience of mine. It was during the bitter struggle for supremacy between President Johnson and Congress, while the attempted impeachment of the former by the latter was in progress with all its excitements.

One evening Mr. Rollins and Hon. Roscoe Conkling had occasion to be in conference with a friend near the outskirts of Washington. It was after midnight when they started to return to their homes. On their way they met unexpectedly a man who was commonly suspected of being an

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

agent of the more zealous and determined friends of the President in the effort to prevent his impeachment. It was even said that he was offering bribes of money or of official favor in order to win votes from the opposition. As the two friends, who were acquaintances of this man, met him, they said a word of ordinary salutation, and passed on. After going a few yards, Mr. Rollins said :

"Conkling, suppose we were seen as we were speaking to that man just now. If it were told in Washington to-morrow that we two were seen out here in conference with that man after midnight, what unjust suspicion it might throw on us.

"We couldn't deny the fact that we were out here speaking with him after midnight, and we shouldn't have the opportunity of explaining to all how it happened, or, if we did, we might not be believed. I tell you, Conkling, we are always in danger of being misunderstood or misrepresented, even when we are doing the best we can."

## God's Protection of One's Good Name

To Mr. Rollins's surprise, Mr. Conkling responded :

" Well, Rollins, we ought to believe that God will take care of our good name while we are honestly doing our duty in his service."

Mr. Rollins suggested, as he told me this incident, that this truth impressed him more as uttered by Mr. Conkling than if a clergyman had said it. Yet it is a truth to be held precious, whoever utters it. If God can be trusted to guard our homes and health and life, we can surely trust him to guard the greater treasure of our good name and reputation, where his supernatural control of the natural is even more needed here than in those other spheres. My conviction on this subject has strengthened with the passing years, and I have had added reason to be grateful that this truth is a truth.

On one occasion, not long after the Civil War, I was sent for in my Hartford home to come to the relief of a Christian mother

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

in another New England city, who desired my counsel and assistance. Her wayward son, in whose welfare I had been interested for years, had run away from home, and she had heard of him as in trouble in a certain district of Brooklyn, New York. Her husband was ill, and was in such a condition that she could not even tell him of her trouble, hence she was all the more anxious and distressed. When I learned the facts I determined to attempt her relief.

Telling my wife, who alone knew of my plans, I started for Brooklyn to find the young man. As the visit involved some personal peril, and my wife was anxious for me, I took, to encourage her, a pistol that I had carried in my army service. In this I made a mistake that I have never since repeated. God can protect his child without a revolver.

While attempting to board a crowded car at a street corner near the outskirts of Brooklyn, my buttoned overcoat lapel caught on the hand-rail and was torn open

## God's Protection of One's Good Name

as I stepped up. My pistol fell out; it struck on the hammer as it fell, and a flash and explosion followed. Cries and confusion resulted, and all was excitement. As I stepped back on the ground I picked up my pistol unobserved and replaced it in my pocket, and I found myself in the rapidly increasing crowd, quite unsuspected of a part in the cause of this excitement.

As I stood on the sidewalk looking at the crowd, I saw that I could easily walk off unhindered; yet that would be unmanly. Seeing a policeman near, I stepped up to him, and said :

"I am the cause of all this scene. A pistol accidentally fell from my pocket and was discharged. It may have wounded some one. I want to put myself in your care."

It proved that the car conductor had received a slight flesh wound in the calf of his leg. I went with my protector to the police station office, and there the whole case was considered. The policeman to

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

whom I first spoke reported that I had come to him voluntarily when I was unsuspected, and it was manifestly an accident. I saw the conductor, and told him I would gladly meet all expense to which he might be subjected. Then I was permitted to leave unmolested, on the giving of my personal address. I inquired particularly if it was essential that my name be made public. Being told that the police office had no power to refuse to give it to the press if requested, I had to accept the state of things as it was, and I returned to my home.

My position was now most unfortunate. I was prevented, by the nature of my special mission at that time, from explaining to the public why I was in that particular region at that time, with a loaded pistol. A newspaper report of the occurrence would be likely to throw suspicion on me, without my having the power even to attempt the clearing of myself. I faced an unpleasant dilemma. When I reached my

## God's Protection of One's Good Name

home in the evening, I prostrated myself before the Lord, and stated the case as it was.

I told him that, while I saw my error in having the pistol with me, I was seeking to do his work, and this trouble had come upon me in this effort. I realized that, if my good name was smirched in the opinion of the public, I ought to retire from his public service, for God's servants should have a good report among those who are without. Hence I would leave it to him to say, by the issue of this affair, whether I was to continue in my special work for him, or to retire from it; and there I rested it.

It was with no ordinary interest that I looked into the New York papers as they came to Hartford the next forenoon. In at least three of the principal metropolitan dailies the report of the affair in Brooklyn was given in full; but in each case a different name was given as mine, and in no instance had it any resemblance to the real one.

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

As I read these reports I dropped on my knees before God, and thanked him that he had thus indicated his wish that I should still continue in his work under his guard and guidance.

How good it is for a child of God to feel that in every peril in his sphere of God's service he "shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty"!

## IX

### Given a Treasure in Friend and Helper

God's best gifts to us are ordinarily not in our finding some missing material treasure, or in enabling us to discharge some particular duty, but in his bringing to our side some friend or helper who is more to our mental and spiritual life than we dared to think of, or to desire, before the gift came from God. In this line I have had very much to be grateful for; and it is of such a gift, as peculiarly pointed out of God, that I now wish to bear my hearty testimony.

In the spring of 1870 I was living at Hartford, with a business office in Boston, in charge of the general missionary operations of The American Sunday-school Union for the New England field. For several years I had had a valued assistant in that work,

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

in Hartford, aiding me in my official correspondence and in the details of Sunday-school movements in Connecticut. Suddenly that assistant was called to another sphere of labor, with opportunities peculiarly suited to his talents and tastes, and he said he would leave it with me to say whether he should accept the proffer, to my serious inconvenience, or should continue as my helper. I saw that it was my duty to advise him, for his own sake, to accept the position, even though I did not see how I could replace him in the position he was occupying. And it was thus that I found myself needing an assistant in a sphere of the Lord's service, without knowing which way to turn for him. I laid the matter before the Lord, and was on the watch for his indications of help to me.

On the third Sunday in May, I was a visitor in the Sunday-school of the Second Congregational Church of Norwich, Connecticut. I had, in advance, no reason to suppose that I might there have any indi-

## Given a Treasure in Friend and Helper

cation as to the supply of my special need, nor was this need peculiarly in my mind at the time. During the opening exercises I was seated between the superintendent and the singing-leader. Just as I was bending my head in prayer, my eyes caught a glimpse of a young man passing through the door of the library-room at my right hand. I did not see the full face even for the moment, but as it passed from sight the message was borne in upon my mind from above, "*That is the young man who is to be your helper.*"

When the prayer was concluded, I turned my eyes to the library-room, and I saw the young man there. Pointing him out to the singing-leader by my side, I asked, "Who is he?" The answer came, "That's Johnnie Wattles." I said, "I'll ask you about him by and by;" and then I gave myself again to the exercises of the hour.

Later I was told that "Johnnie Wattles" was assistant in a well-known apothecary's store in the city, where, with a younger

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

brother, he was learning the business, in order that the two might start out for themselves in that business. It seemed most unlikely that he would be willing to turn aside from his life work to assist me in what was little more than a temporary clerical position; but I felt justified in following up the matter in the line of the mental suggestion that I had received as from the Lord. I sought an interview with him, and, without telling him of this mental suggestion, I spoke of the position which I desired to have filled, and asked him if he would think of taking it. I spoke of the incidental advantages of the place in the kind of work with which it was associated and the sort of people with whom it would bring him into pleasant relations. He expressed surprise at my interest in him as a stranger, and promised to look carefully into the question, and let me know his conclusions.

I did not, of course, propose to ignore reason and prudence in such a matter, be-

## Given a Treasure in Friend and Helper

cause of the providential prompting which had started me in this line. I consulted the pastor of the young man as to his character and capacity. He spoke of him with warmth as of a lovely spirit, of fine natural capabilities, and of firm Christian principles. Others whom I consulted agreed with his pastor as to his winning ways and his sterling worth, and I had no doubt on these points.

He also looked into the matter cautiously, and consulted various advisers. Most of these thought he would be unwise to make the proposed change, but his pastor and a few others approved his inclination to accept the proffered position. In talking it over with me, he said that he had felt that the business of a druggist was his life work, and he should not wish to turn permanently aside from that pathway without clearer indications than he had yet received of the Lord's wish for him to change. I told him that he would be entirely free to try it for only a year as an experiment.

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

I was all the while careful not to attempt to influence him in the slightest degree in favor of accepting my proposition by any suggestion that in my opinion it would be wise for him to do so. I wanted him left free to act as he thought God would have him. I wanted him to come only if God wanted him to. And I knew that if God wanted him to come he would come.

Four weeks after the subject was first broached to him, he wrote me as follows: "I believe I have looked carefully at both sides of the question which you have so kindly left entirely with me, and am thoroughly prepared to-night to decide. I most gladly and heartily offer myself to you, hoping, as I do so, that it may prove for our mutual good. Ever since I had the first interview with you, I have been delighted with the idea of making the change, and have not now the least doubt in my mind but that it is the very best thing I can do. It seems almost a miracle to me that you should have noticed me as

## Given a Treasure in Friend and Helper

you did, and much more that you should have once thought of asking me to take the place; and I can only hope and pray that I may be such an assistant to you as you have anticipated. I am afraid that I shall not come up to your expectations, but shall try, and do the best I can."

At the time he first came to me, Mr. Wattles was a little more than twenty years old, but his fair face and youthful appearance made him seem hardly more than eighteen. Yet he was of most engaging manners, and he commanded confidence without limitation. He won every heart at the start by his looks and ways, and he held every heart to the last by his sterling worth. Outside of his office work, his first experience in the Sunday-school field was as superintendent of a mission school in Hartford, where the roughest boys and the most cultivated teachers were alike under the spell of his winsome presence. Then he was for a while the leader of the teachers'-meeting of the Asylum Hill Con-

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

gregational Church, in its weekly study of the Sunday-school lesson. Among those teachers were men and women of rich experience and disciplined minds, including a distinguished judge of the Supreme Court of the state; and all were alike charmed and helped by his leadership. While not having the advantages of a liberal education, Mr. Wattles had clearness of mind in the perception of truth, and sound good sense in the use of all his powers. Moreover, he worked diligently in preparation for any service he was called to attempt, and he never assumed to know what he did not know positively.

Before six months had passed, Mr. Wattles said that he would never go back to his former position, even at ten thousand dollars a year. He felt that God was leading him to better service. He soon had his younger brother in another branch of the work which now had his heart, and he himself was pressing onward and upward. He became the general secretary of the

## **Given a Treasure in Friend and Helper**

Connecticut Sunday-school Association, and he developed special power in organizing and directing movements for the improvement of the Sunday-schools of the state. He showed himself also an effective speaker in conventions and institutes throughout New England. Moreover, he was showing power and gaining influence and winning friends more and more widely all the time.

And in this way my life came to be linked with the God-led life of John D. Wattles, who was later my loved friend, my dear son-in-law, my business partner, and a helper, an example, and an inspiration to me, while proving himself a helper and an inspiration to many thousands of those who never saw his face or heard his voice, and an example to every one who ever knew him as he was. And when, at his life's close, after my twenty-three years of loving companionship with him, I came to look back over the way he was led of God so willingly, so trustfully, so loyally,

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

even to the hour when he was led beyond our human sight, I rejoiced that I was permitted to be so near him in his constant walk with God, and to have seen so clearly the loveliness of such a God-led life.

## X

### Teaching Lessons of Trust to my Helper

Because John Wattles, my God-given friend and helper, was younger than myself in years and Christian experience, I felt it to be my duty and privilege to give him the benefit of any lesson I had learned in God's service, and he was ever ready to heed and to profit by such suggestions. These lessons were in various lines, as from time to time I thought he had special need.

One afternoon, as he came into my Hartford home after several hours' absence in the city, he mentioned to me that he had, since he went out, lost a gold sleeve-button which he greatly prized as a souvenir. I asked him what effort he had made to recover it. He answered, "None," for he had been in so many places, since he left

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

home, that he had no reason for looking in any one place more than another.

A lesson that I then desired to teach him was the importance of persistent thoroughness in whatever he had to do, so I said to him :

“ Well, I think you had better not say that you can’t find it in any place till at least you have looked in all places where you may have left it. Why not carefully retrace your steps to the ten places or the twenty that you have been in since you last saw it, and see what comes of that? ”

Promptly he started out to do as I suggested, while I remained at my study table.

As I sat writing, the thought came to me that I had started my young friend on this mission in his own strength, without suggesting to him that it was only by God’s guidance that he could hope to be successful, and for that guidance he should pray at the start. For this omission I reproached myself, and was heartily ashamed.

## **Teaching Lessons of Trust to my Helper**

Dropping on my knees by my study chair,  
I prayed to God :

“Father, forgive me! Here have I started out this loved child of thine on a search where he needs thy special help, without suggesting that he should seek that help trustfully. Moreover, I have not myself prayed for thy help to him. Grant now that he suffers no loss through my failure toward thee.”

As I rose from my knees, John Wattles entered the outside door, saying, “I’ve found the sleeve-button.” At this the thought came to me, “Your prayer then had nothing to do with this; for he must have found the button before you prayed.” “Tell me where you found it,” I said.

“Well, that’s strangest of all,” he responded. “I had retraced my steps so far as I could recall them, looking about me all the way, but I reached the house again without finding anything. Just as my hand was on the door-knob to enter here, I was prompted to stop and look back, and there

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

on the very door-step, where it must have been all the while, was the missing sleeve-button."

There was not much room to doubt God's part in all this. I told Wattles of my conscious failure and my penitent prayer, and then we kneeled together before God, and gave him thanks for our newly learned lesson, and we tried thence-forward to profit by it.

After some three years in the work to which I had originally invited him, Mr. Wattles came to feel that at the best there was no immediate prospect there of promotion into any such service as would seem to be worthy of the best endeavors of his life, and he began to look about him for a more promising sphere. The life-insurance field was at that time offering special inducements to energetic canvassers, and he had reason to think he might be peculiarly successful in it. He came to me seeking counsel in the matter. I asked him whether he thought that God had

## **Teaching Lessons of Trust to my Helper**

called him to the place he was now in. He said he did. I asked him whether this place still demanded all the powers he now had. He said it did. I asked him whether God had given him any special indication that he ought to go elsewhere. He said he had not. I asked him whether, in case God really wanted him to stay where he was all his life, with no other gain than the gain of serving God there, he would be willing to yield all his personal ambitions and desires for other service, and to live and die just there.

He thought over this question for a few minutes, and then he said heartily that he was ready to be led of God as to his life work, and that he would trust God to show him just where he could best serve and honor God. Here was another turning-point in his life path, or, rather, another point at which he refused to turn from that path. Within a year of that time the great financial crash of 1873 came, with its shattering, for the time, of the best possibilities

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

of the field that had seemed so tempting to him; and within a little more than two years there came to him an opening to remove to Philadelphia with me, and become a part owner, and the business manager, of *The Sunday School Times*, where he continued to life's close. Thus again he saw that God was ready to lead one who wanted to be led of God.

## XI

### Taught Lessons of Faith by my Helper

Although from my greater experience, when I first came to know John Wattles, it was my privilege to teach some lessons in trustful service to that new friend and helper, he soon passed on before me in the path of such service. It was not long before I realized gratefully, as did all who knew us, that he was in advance of me in restful faith, as he was in love and zeal and practical efficiency, and, in consequence, I came to lean on and to look up to my young and admirable strong-souled friend and partner.

When he and I assumed entire and joint control of *The Sunday School Times* its circulation was less than twenty-five thousand. Largely through his ability and energy that circulation rose to more than

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

one hundred and fifty thousand, at which point it continued up to the time of his death. In all my editorial work, I was helped by his wise counsel and aided by his hearty co-operation. I could have done little without him; and he deserved the credit for much of the best that was secured in every department of the paper, in all the years after he joined me in its management.

Clearness of head, quickness of perception, grasp of principles of action, unswerving integrity, firmness of purpose, coupled with remarkable winsomeness of manner, were marked characteristics in the business dealings of Mr. Wattles. All who were brought in contact with him felt that he was a man whom they could trust utterly, while he was not to be easily imposed upon, nor turned from his convictions or judgments.

A good illustration of his uniform method of dealing with others in important business transactions was given, in a letter

## Taught Lessons of Faith by my Helper

written, during the last few months of his life, to one who was acting as his representative in the negotiation of a large contract, which he would be very glad to secure. Speaking of the interviews of his representative with the other party to the contract, he said: "Don't *show* any anxiety over the matter. Don't *have* any anxiety. Be awfully courteous and accommodating, but quietly determined; and smile sweetly if the whole thing falls through."

But in all and above all it was the beautiful rest of his faith that was the source of his power, and that was felt to be so by all who were with him or who came under his personal influence. That was indeed a cause of gratification and an incitement to me.

Although having the appearance of health, Mr. Wattles was in his later years courageously resisting for a long time a tendency to acute diseases of the lungs. For eight years he was compelled to pass a portion of every winter in Florida; and

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

soon after his return from the South, in April, 1891, he was brought very low with a complication of lung troubles. Before his physician had observed any fresh cause of illness, Mr. Wattles was impressed with the thought that God was about to lead him into a deeper flood than he had yet passed; and, in his quiet faith, his only anxiety in view of it was for his dear ones, not for himself. As he sat alone in his room, on the evening before his outburst of disease, he penciled these lines on a newspaper wrapper, in expression of his feelings of the hour.

### THROUGH THE WATERS

Indeed I know  
That thou wilt be with me;  
For here below  
Thy touch has won my confidence.  
But may I know  
That thou wilt be with them  
Whom I love so?  
Then with joy could I go hence.  
Whether the waters should be deep and wide,  
Or what may be upon the other side,

## Taught Lessons of Faith by my Helper

It matters not;  
For I indeed do know  
That thou wilt be with me,  
Since here below  
Thy touch has won my confidence.  
But may I know  
That thou wilt be with them  
Whom I love so?  
Then with joy can I go hence.

The attack of disease was a violent one, and its precise nature somewhat obscure, and he sank under it steadily, despite the skill of the ablest physicians, and the current of loving prayers that went up for him continually. Finally the physicians themselves felt that the end was very near, and they permitted me to speak freely with him of matters that called for consideration, in view of his approaching death, as I had told them I must before he should be finally unable to respond to me. So, one Sunday afternoon, I kneeled by his bedside, and spoke lovingly of our long-time relations and of the possibilities of the future, asking him how I might act for him and

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

his, and for our common interests, in his absence.

I had for years so leaned upon him in the business management of our affairs, that I felt quite incompetent to take up the entire burden of them at that time; and I feared I should utterly break down, if I were left alone. In my weakness I burst out with the agonizing cry, "Dear John, I don't see how I can live on and do my work without you!"

That cry of mine was an appeal to his unselfish soul that he could not resist. As he told me afterwards, he then saw with surprise and anxiety what my condition was, and that I really felt I could not at that time do what needed to be done without him. And although, as he said, he had not before prayed for his recovery, he at once asked God to allow him to get up and help me. "And as soon as I asked this of God," he said, "I was assured that it would be so. I knew I should get up." In his trustfulness he had not prayed for pro-

## Taught Lessons of Faith by my Helper

longed life on his own account; but if he was really needed here for the sake of others he would ask prolonged life for their sake, and if he asked it he knew it would be given.

As showing how God works through human means for the accomplishing of his divine purposes, that very afternoon, when things looked so dark for John Wattles's recovery, his two physicians were prompted to attempt an experimental operation that offered small prospect of success, and that might, indeed, hasten the end. That operation was successful beyond their most sanguine anticipations. And so my friend and helper was raised from that bed of death; and he set himself without delay to the arranging of our business affairs, and to the training of his successor, so as to enable me to bear the responsibility that would be on me when he should finally be taken away. He was sure that God was leading him in all his life work, and that God would sustain him until it was completed.

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

It would seem, indeed, as if God had been ready to release him earlier from all struggle and suffering, and that he himself was ready to go. But my call to him for help made him ask God that he might get up again, and live on awhile, at whatever cost to himself, in order to render me assistance in God's service.

And for two years after that he suffered and toiled lovingly and uncomplainingly, doing for others, and teaching us all lessons of love and trust. In his last letter to me from his Florida home, where he entered into his rest, he wrote of his Saviour's sustaining presence, "I think that nothing but constant suffering could have brought me to realize as I do that I may have some of his own strength every day, as well as be a sharer of his life forever. It is indeed a wonderful thing, but it is true, that we can live in him."

Neither death nor life was able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## XII

### God's Tenderness with a Doubting Truster

It does not follow that one who has had most reason to trust God trusts him most confidently. This has been true from the beginning, and man's hesitancy in trusting God's promised love and loving care is still manifest on every side among the children of men.

Abraham, father of the faithful, when pleading for Sodom, seemed to tire of interceding with God before God tired of granting his requests. Gideon, "mighty man of valor" that he was, when specially called of God to the deliverance of his people from the Midianites, and assured that he should have success, asked sign after sign from God in testimony that God meant what he said. He asked, as he left overnight a fleece of wool on the threshing-

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

floor, that God would send dew on the fleece, while there should be no dew on the ground about it. When this was done, Gideon was not quite satisfied. He asked that God would try it the other way, and send dew on the ground around the fleece, while the fleece was kept dry. This was like God in his loving tenderness with one who had doubt even while he trusted. And Gideon evidently had a good deal of human nature in him, in his hesitancy in his faith, even while he was a man of uncommon faith and of uncommon valor. It is easier to doubt when one has no reason to doubt, than to have faith where one has every reason to have faith.

A young Christian worker, whose experiences of God's loving tenderness I had occasion to know not a little about, was a striking illustration of this truth in God's dealings with his children, even with those for whom he seems to be doing most, year by year. He began his Christian life while a poor boy near the border line between

## **God's Tenderness with a Doubting Truster**

Massachusetts and New Hampshire. When brought to consecrate his life to Christ's service, he gave himself unreservedly to that service. He had neither education nor the means to secure it, nor had he friends to help him along in his studies; but with all that he was, and with all his lack, he put himself at God's disposal, to be used as God should direct.

He had the idea that serving God wholly meant being in the work of the Christian ministry, at home or abroad. Yet how he could prepare himself for the ministry he had no idea. In his uncertainty, therefore, he went on his knees before God, and asked for guidance. He told God that he would start out at once on a course of preparation for the ministry. If this was right, God would continue to help him. If he had erred in judgment in counting this his proper course, God would cease to open the way for a farther advance, and he would, when thus stopped, know that he must seek some other line of service.

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

When I first met him he was near the close of his course in the theological seminary. He told me how God had led him along step by step, giving him repeated evidences of his approval when he had special need of help. Yet, he said, he had found himself doubting, or questioning, at each temporary obstacle or hindrance, as if God had not yet fully proved himself as his guide and helper.

For instance, after he had worked his way along through his preparatory studies, he came to a point where he could not pass beyond the Greek Reader without a Greek lexicon; and yet he had no money for the purchase of such a work. He seemed at a standstill. It looked as if God's hindrance had come. He laid the matter before the Lord, and then waited. For a day or two he studied out his lessons by the aid of the glossary at the back of the Reader, but he knew that he could not go on in that way much longer.

One day he was sent for to the hotel to

## **God's Tenderness with a Doubting Truster**

see a stranger who had inquired for him. Going there, he was told that the stranger was closing up the estate of a clergyman who had died in another town. Some of that clergyman's books were to be given by his executor where they could do good to others. The stranger having heard of this student as working his way along to the ministry, had brought these books for him to choose from. As the student was shown the books on the stranger's table, he saw there the Greek lexicon of which he was in need. He took it, and thanked the stranger. Then he thanked God, and took courage.

He confessed, as he told me his experiences, that he was frequently troubled with doubts as to whether he was really being led of God; yet God was evidently dealing tenderly with the doubting truster. On one occasion, after he reached the theological seminary in his course, he was so distressed on this point that he prayed earnestly about it one forenoon. He even

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

asked the Lord to give him a more positive sign than before in order to encourage his faith. He had need just now of five dollars, to enable him to take his next step in this path of duty, and he knew not where to turn for it. If, indeed, he were to receive five dollars in a letter by mail just at this time, he would know that the Lord had sent it to encourage his faith. He had never had a gift of money sent him in this way. So, Gideon-like, he asked this new sign from the Lord.

After this season of prayer he lay down on the outside of his bed and slept a tired sleep. He awaked refreshed at noon, and went to his dinner without a thought of his doubt or his prayer. After dinner he went with some of his fellow-students to the city post-office at the hour of the principal mail distribution. To his surprise, a letter addressed to him was handed out with the seminary mail. On opening it, he found it was from an uncle of his in New York State, who had never before given him any

## **God's Tenderness with a Doubting Truster**

assistance, but who now enclosed five dollars, having heard that he was working his way to the ministry, and might be glad of a little help. It would seem as if such a child of God ought to be ready to trust such a Father in heaven. He might have been, if he had not had so much human nature in him, Gideon-like.

It was quite a number of years, from the time when he determined to enter upon a course of study with a view to the Christian ministry, before he completed that course in his graduation from the theological seminary. He had only a few dollars when he began his studies in the village academy. He had toiled hard to secure his support in working his way up by slow degrees. During his last year in the seminary he had occasionally supplied a pulpit in the country, and received compensation for that service. On receiving his pay for such a ministry on the Sunday before his graduation, as he told me soon afterwards, he found that he had a few dollars more than

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

he started out with on his consecrated course. As he then looked back to that beginning, he realized how good God had been to him in all these years, and he wondered that he could have ever doubted God.

I had the privilege of helping that child of God into his needy home-missionary field in California, and to hear from him after he was there; and I was privileged to be used of God in answering, as it were, another of his prayers in an hour of his need in his mission field. My friend, Hon. Henry P. Haven of New London, in writing to me one day, asked, in a way that was his frequent method, at the close of his letter on some business matter:

"Do you know of any one of God's children to whom I ought to send twenty dollars? If you do, I'll send that sum to you." I replied that I knew such a man, and I told him of this home missionary, who, as I was well aware, had difficulty in getting along in his new field.

## **God's Tenderness with a Doubting Truster**

Learning that the young man was in California, Mr. Haven sent a check, payable in gold, as that was the standard there, while specie payments were suspended throughout the country. In acknowledging the gift, my home-missionary friend told me that I could not know how timely its receipt was. He had found his scattered parish, or local field, more than twenty miles long, and he had to do all his visiting on foot. One day, one of his parishioners told the new pastor that he must get a horse, and that a man who was interested in the work, and with whom he had been talking on the subject, would let him have a little pony suitable for his purpose for twenty dollars in gold, which was much less than its worth.

My friend said that his parishioner little thought that, with his starvation pittance of support, twenty dollars was as hopelessly beyond his means as two hundred; so he merely thanked him, and told him that he would think it over. And, just

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

after this conversation, my letter with Mr. Haven's gold check came in, and the missionary pony was secured.

With the frequent repetition of such evidences of God's guidance given to us, or to those whom we know or know of, it is indeed strange that we are not readier in our need to pray and to trust, nothing doubting. Yet God does not get discouraged with us, nor lack in his loving tenderness. This is because He is what he is, and because he knows that we are what we are.

## XIII

### **T**rusting God rather than a Child of God

It is hard for us to learn that our faith must rest on God, rather than on God's promises, or on God's word, or on our prayers to God in our need, or on our best work in his service according to his commandment and the indications of his providences. It is because God is God that we should trust him utterly, and have confidence in his promises, and prize his word, and pray as he invites, and work as he directs. Back of all that represents God is God himself, and he is to be trusted above all. An occasion when I had reason to emphasize the duty of trusting God rather than a child of God brought out this truth more clearly to my own mind.

A troubled Christian mother sent for me in an hour of dire distress. Her only son

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

had been for a while wayward and dissipated. She had prayed for him earnestly and constantly. After a while he had been brought into the church, and had become an active Christian worker. This gave her joy unspeakable. But now he had fallen back again. He had seemingly lost his faith. He had left his home, and enlisted in the navy, and had sailed to the far East. His mother was broken-hearted and well-nigh in despair.

I asked her if she had less reason to have faith in God, as she now prayed for her boy, than before. She said that, of course, she couldn't have as much ground of faith while her son was a reprobate as when he was active in Christian work.

"Is the difference in God or in your boy?" I asked.

"The difference is in my boy," she said, "and that is what's troubling me."

"On whom did your faith rest when your boy was doing best?"

"On God, of course."

## **T**rusting God rather than a Child of God

“And has God changed?”

“Of course not.”

“Then why is your faith lessened?”

“Because of my poor boy’s failure.”

“Then you are looking at your boy as if he were the ground of your faith, instead of at God.”

“Do you mean to suggest,” said the anxious mother, “that even now, while my poor boy is in his present state, I can look up to God, and pray for my boy as trustfully as I prayed while he was active in Christian work? Do you mean to suggest that?”

“If your faith rests on God, you can pray to him just as confidently now as ever for whatever he can do for you or your boy. But you must look at God, and not at your boy, while you pray,” I said.

“Then I’ll do that,” said the anxious mother; and she turned again to God in need and in trust.

Two months or so after that, that mother sent for me again. She had received a

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

letter from her son that gladdened her heart. It was from the vessel he was on in the Chinese seas. It was a letter full of penitence and of good purposes, and of hope and trust; and it told a touching story.

About the time when the mother turned anew to God in her New England home with a prayer of fresh faith for her wandering boy,—before, of course, he could have had any word from her about it,—as he was on the deck, one sunny afternoon, in those far-off Chinese waters, a call seemed to come to him from God summoning him to turn from his evil courses to his better self, and to God and to his old faith in God; and a sense of his sin and his need came over him. Overpowered by his feelings, he went down into the forecastle and prostrated himself before God, confessing his sins, and asking for pardon and help to do differently. And now he wrote to his mother as a penitent child, asking her to pray for him, and telling her of his sorrow

## **Trusting God rather than a Child of God**

and his new purpose of living a new life by God's help.

That glad-hearted mother was ready now to perceive and to say that it is ever better to trust in God than to trust in any child of God, even her own child. That's a lesson for all of us to learn and to value.

A clergyman in Eastern Massachusetts, whom I knew well about that time, told me of a good Scotch mother in his parish who had learned this precious lesson, and who found comfort in it. She had given her boy to God at his birth, and she felt that she and hers were in the everlasting covenant with God. Faithfully she trained her boy, but he went astray. While sad-hearted over this, she did not despair; for her faith rested on God, not on her boy.

Going to God with her loving, trustful heart, she said in confident assurance,—an assurance that God honors in a child of his,—“Lord, I am thine, and Johnnie's mine, and we are thine. Lord, thy Johnnie's going astray. Bring him back, Lord;

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

bring him back. Lord, if Johnnie's lost, in the Great Day his blood will I require at thine hand."

Such holy boldness, in a child of God, will never fail of its purpose. When a troubled father came to Jesus with his demon-possessed child, and asked for his help, Jesus said, "If thou canst [believe]! All things are possible to him that believeth [for his as well as for himself]" (Mark 9 : 17-25). Then that father cried out, "I believe [for my child and for myself]; help thou mine unbelief." And the needed help was given. That is God's way with his children.

## XIV

### Similar Experiences by Personal Friends

When a child of God has any personal experience of joy or of sorrow, of trial or of encouragement, that seems peculiar and exceptional, he is likely to find that others—more, perhaps, than he has imagined—have had similar, if not the same, experiences, and that he is by no means solitary in his opportunity of learning the lessons which God would thus teach him. Whatever encouragement God gives to any child of his to call upon him in his need, according to God's invitation and promise, every other child of God in like need can have from God if he will rightly claim it.

This, indeed, is the chief reason for my recording these illustrative answers to prayer that have come within my range of personal experience, or the experience of

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

those personally known to me. I have by no means recorded all of the remarkable answers to prayer that have been accorded to me in the years of my Christian life,—nor yet, indeed, even the most remarkable of them,—but I have selected a few of those most likely to be of help to God's children who read this record.

I have often given to younger disciples illustrations of my way of praying to God for special help, and of God's way of giving help to me in answer to the prayer of need and of trust. This I have done to encourage or strengthen their faith; and at times they have come back to tell me, joyfully, of God's dealings with them, in response to their prayers, as tenderly and lovingly as I had urged them to expect.

An illustration of this was in the case of an earnest young Christian disciple whom I had been privileged to lead to the Master when we were first together in a health resort in East Florida, soon after the Civil War. The special duties and privileges of

## **Similar Experiences by Personal Friends**

the child of God were quite new to him when he entered that service, and he was glad to hear every word of suggestion or counsel that I gave him in that line. This matter of special answer to particular prayers in things of our ordinary life seemed to him at first almost too wonderful and too good to be true. Yet he listened to and pondered all that I said on that subject, and wished that he could verify it in his own experience.

One summer, he was in the White Mountains. In his wandering among the hills, one day, he lost a valuable diamond stud. Missing it when he returned to the hotel, he regretted its loss, but its finding seemed out of the question. At this juncture, my teachings on the subject of special prayer came to him with fresh force. He realized that he could not by himself hope to find the missing stud among the loose stones on the rough mountain side, where he had been wandering that afternoon, as he might have hoped to had he lost it on

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

an ordinary highway. Yet God could direct him to it wherever it was, if that, indeed, were God's way.

Kneeling before God, he stated the case as a young disciple. He told God that he realized that, of himself, he was helpless in such a search, but that he was going to attempt it, and he asked God's guidance in it. If, indeed, he found the stud, he would accept this as indicating that God approved his faith in such a matter. It was not merely the diamond stud that he sought to recover, it was encouragement to his faith through God's help. In that spirit he clambered again the mountain side.

His eye of sense, quickened by the light of faith, was alert and watchful as he went again over the rough path in the direction of his former wanderings. Soon the glistening of the diamond among the stones of the mountain path attracted his attention, and he came back to his hotel to thank God for his guidance, and with renewed and increased faith as more precious than

## **Similar Experiences by Personal Friends**

a thousand diamonds. As I watched him in the subsequent years, I could bear witness to this, as he encouraged others to a like faith in God.

Another illustration of willingness to trust God utterly was given to me by a friend and co-worker in Boston, when I was in charge of the New England Sunday-school missionary field. In his boyhood his godly mother, with two children dependent on her, had small means of support, and at times she did not know where her next day's sustenance was to be found. Yet her faith in God never failed or faltered. She trusted him fully for herself and hers, whatever her circumstances were.

One evening, there came a call on her for help to a needy neighbor. She was sure that that appeal was one to which God would have her respond. She had, at that time, only fifty cents in the world, with two children to care for; but she had that, and God knew it, and yet this appeal as from him had come to her for what she

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

had, and she would not refuse it. Her children had been already fed for the day. They needed nothing more till to-morrow. Like the widow of Zarephath, when Elijah, God's prophet, asked from her bread that seemed needed for her hungry child, this widow gave at God's call.

She gave her last fifty cents to the poor neighbor, who was to her as a messenger of God. Then she committed herself and hers trustfully to God, nothing doubting. As if to honor and approve her faith, that same evening a ring was heard at her door-bell. Going to the door, she found no one there, but an unaddressed envelope was found under the door, containing five dollars, which she took as a fresh gift from God, and thanked him for it most gratefully. That was the only like experience in her Christian life; yet this was enough to strengthen her faith, and the faith of her two sons, who were reared in God's service.

## XV

### Prayer of a Soldier Prisoner Answered

It has often been the case that one who, in the face of impending death, promised that his life, if spared, should be devoted to God's service, has forgotten that promise when God has given him safety. But, on the other hand, there have been those who made such a promise in the hour of peril, and afterwards redeemed it faithfully. Such an instance, in the case of a young army comrade of mine, stands out as memorable in my life recollections.

During all my three years of army service, my regiment was brigaded with the Twenty-fourth Massachusetts Regiment. During portions of the time that regiment had no chaplain, and I was privileged to be on terms of kindly intimacy with both its officers and its enlisted men. Among those

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

men who, on Seabrook Island, in the spring of 1863, kept up a praying circle in order to promote their Christian life and growth, there was a young corporal who interested me by his intelligence, his frank and hearty ways, and his Christian devotedness. On the Sunday before he left for the war, he had stood up alone in his country home church and made a public profession of his Christian faith, and from that hour he had been faithful to his profession. He also had a good name for bravery and fidelity, and readiness to perform every soldier service to which he was summoned.

When, in the early summer of 1864, we were in Virginia as a part of the Army of the James, co-operating with the Army of the Potomac, General Butler called for a volunteer scout to venture through the enemy's lines, at Bermuda Hundred, and obtain information as to the position and movements of the enemy. In response to this call, this young corporal of the Twenty-

## Prayer of a Soldier Prisoner Answered

fourth volunteered, although it involved the peril of being taken and treated as a spy.

Having scouted successfully within the enemy's lines for two or three nights, and obtained important information that would have been invaluable to his commander, he was captured just as he was about attempting a return to his command. When captured and brought before a Confederate commander, the first proposition was to hang him at once as a spy, without a formal trial. But it was decided to confine him in the jail in Petersburg until he should be formally tried and condemned by a court-martial. In this emergency his chief prayer to God was not that his young life should be spared, but that he might be faithful even unto death ; and God heard his prayer, and gave him strength.

Rapid movements of troops from Virginia to Georgia were frequent just then within the Confederate lines, in consequence of Sherman's march to the sea. The young captured scout was sent, with those having

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

him in charge and with the evidence in his case, to Georgia, and he found himself facing death in the jail in Macon. It was then and there that the young soldier's new consecration to God occurred.

On his knees, behind the grated door of his hope-barred cell, he pleaded that he might have prolonged life and restored liberty. In no mere selfish love of life and liberty, he promised that, if his life be spared, it should be given wholly and heartily to the service of Christ. In speaking to me long afterward of this longing prayer, he said sincerely: "I told God that, if my life were spared, I should know *he* did it; for there was no other hope for me then;" vain was the help of man.

At the very time that the officer having in charge his case, as an alleged spy, was preparing to come to the jail to take him out for trial, there was an alarm outside of the city. A portion of Sherman's army had made a circuitous movement in that direction. This officer, among others, was

## **Prayer of a Soldier Prisoner Answered**

hurried to the front, and in the changes that followed he was removed elsewhere, and the papers in the case of the captured scout were not to be found in Macon; and he was thenceforward held as an ordinary prisoner of war.

He could never have any doubt, from that hour onward, that, in response to his faith-filled prayer, God had given him prolonged life when, except to the eye of faith, such a thing seemed impossible. Although afterwards he had weary months of imprisonment and varied vicissitudes of soldier service, he was ever confident that he was living to serve God as he had promised to, and he longed still to be true and faithful unto death.

After the war I knew him, as, for years, he was striving to make good his vow of consecration; and I have rarely met a young soldier of Christ who was more zealously true to the blood-stained banner under which he was enrolled. Having secured a hundred dollars through lecturing

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

on his army and prison experiences, he started with that sum to work his way through Phillips Academy at Andover. As he pursued his studies, he swept out the schoolroom, and performed other tasks, at fifteen cents an hour. In the early morning, and at other odd times, he did farm work outside of the village to eke out his support. At times he found difficulty, even with all his hard work, to support himself in the Academy.

On rising one morning he found himself without a cent of money in the world. Going to God, he prayed earnestly for help, and, a few minutes later, he found fifteen dollars between the pages of a book which he took up for study. Some friend, knowing his need, had taken that delicate way of aiding him. As the young student told of this fresh experience of God's goodness, he said gratefully, and in faith: "God will do so again, if it is best. If God wants me to stay at school, I have no fear but that he will find a way for me to get

## Prayer of a Soldier Prisoner Answered

along there." Why should any child of God feel any other way about his Father's care of him?

Counting his life as spared in order that he might devote it wholly to his Saviour's service, there was nothing that he enjoyed more than special work for his Master during the years when he was studying hardest to fit himself for future work. At Andover he taught in a mission school, took active part in prayer-meetings, and conversed on the subject of personal religion with his schoolmates. Two evenings in every week he spent with the pupils of his mission school, in order to promote their spiritual welfare. All this was not from a mere sense of duty, it was a delight to him. "How much real enjoyment it gives me to work for Jesus!" he said. "All other pleasures fade away, and are lost, by the side of it."

Again he wrote, "I don't see how any one can help doing all the good he can.... I have an insatiable thirst after perishing

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

souls, and hope and pray that God will lead me to do good wherever I am. . . . I am thankful for the hope that perhaps, ere-long, I can throw aside all other things, and enter with my whole heart upon the work of saving souls. . . . My heart pants to be wholly engaged in my Master's service."

There was no room for doubt that he was faithful to the promise which he made when he prayed for prolonged life on his knees in Macon jail, as he faced the gallows. It was this way to the last.

At one time he told me of his disappointment, through failing health, in his plans for Christian effort. He had gone to a place in Vermont where there was great lack of such endeavor. He thought, as he said, that even *he* could do something there. But the day he reached the place he was taken ill, and had no power to do any work there. As he expressed it, "Jesus didn't need me in Vermont. He has never needed me anywhere, but he

## **Prayer of a Soldier Prisoner Answered**

has let me work for him sometimes. Oh, if I ever get well enough to work for him again, sha'n't I be thankful for it!"

But his health was hopelessly broken down by his long imprisonment in jail and stockade, his privations and endurances in swamp and dungeon, and his severe army service, and he had to give up his endeavor to enter the ministry or to engage in any active Christian labors. After a season in the Massachusetts General Hospital he returned to his old home in the country, and lay down to die.

To the last he had no thought of complaining, but he found constant cause of thanksgiving. When, in his humble home in Northern Massachusetts, he was simply waiting his summons for muster-out from earthly service, he told gratefully of God's goodness in sending to him, unexpectedly, relatives and friends whom he had desired to see once more.

Again, when he was pressed for means to supply his daily necessities, a sister came

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

to him one morning to say that a letter had been received, covering a gift of thirty dollars for his use. A pleasant smile came over his face as he responded, "I prayed for money last night. It was the first time I had asked for that in a good while."

At the young soldier-scout's request I visited him in his home, and, as I sat by his dying-bed, he asked me if I would conduct his funeral service, and tell his old friends and neighbors of God's wonderful goodness to him. It was that truth which he wanted me to impress on those who had known him, and who were now to know of his experience. I did as he desired, and I never tire of repeating that story as an illustration of God's loving readiness to do for his children according to their needs and their faith.

## XVI

### How God Led the Leaders in the Centennial Exhibition

It is not merely help and guidance to an individual child of God that God gives in response to faith-filled prayer. If two or more are agreed as to what together they need in God's service, they may have confidence that he will hear and respond to them according to their need and their faith. And if God's children unitedly pray to him in behalf of a cause which in any true sense represents his interests or his honor, they may be sure that God is more interested in the object of their prayer than they are. An illustration of such a struggle as this, where I was privileged to know much of it, and, indeed, in which I had a certain part, is worthy of mention in this series of testimonies.

When the "United States Centennial

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

Celebration and Exhibition of 1876," in Philadelphia, was arranged for, it was the first exhibition of really an international character that had been undertaken by this new nation of ours, and many an important practical question had necessarily to be met for the first time by those responsible for its management. One of these questions was the Sunday question. This grew to unexpected importance as the months progressed, and it finally became a center of moral and spiritual conflict.

Until that time, six days had, in this country, been counted an ordinary week's work. Places of amusement or of exhibition were "open every day in the week, *Sundays excepted.*" This was taken as a matter of course. The first regulations decided on by the Centennial Commission, of representative men from every state and territory, appointed by Congress, were framed, two years before the exhibition, with the usual exception. But as the time for the opening drew near, there was a

## How God Led the Leaders

movement to secure the letting down of the bars that would close the great exhibition one day in seven.

Money-making was the main thing at the bottom of the Sunday-opening advocacy, whatever nominal plea was put forth by its representatives. Railroad companies coming into Philadelphia had millions at stake in the question at issue. Various other parties, whose larger or lesser gains were involved, were ready to aid any organized movement to induce the Centennial Commission to reverse its announced decision.

Of course, it would never do for these workers to say that it was a mere matter of dollars and cents that prompted their zeal. It sounded much better to talk of the interests of the working classes, who could come into Philadelphia on Sunday as on no other day in the week to receive good impressions in that great international educating agency now available only for a season. Thus in one way and another, a

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

powerful, unscrupulous, and determined organization to effect the change was secured, and its work began to be felt.

There are always some in the community who are ready to work on the wrong side because it is wrong. Then there are men who will join with the evil-disposed, or will wish them success, because *they* can make money through the triumph of evil. Moreover, there are more or less social cranks, and weak-minded ministers, and other professed Christians, who can be drawn into the support of almost any measure—good or bad—to which a determined man urges them. Hence it is not to be wondered at that, at this time, petitions in favor of the Sunday opening of the exhibition were presented to the Centennial Commission signed by a great many bad men who would do wrong for its own sake; by a great many others who would do wrong when they were paid for it; by many flabby-minded men who had no positive opinions to adhere to with or without pay;

## How God Led the Leaders

and also, doubtless, by some conscientious but misguided men. As to the other side of the question, there was little need of petitions. Public sentiment on the involved issue was well understood. The better portion of the community was largely in favor of Sunday closing.

It was shrewdly planned, by the friends of Sunday opening, to secure by various means a majority of the Centennial Commission to favor rescinding the earlier vote for Sunday closing, and then to bring the matter up for decision, and press for an immediate vote, just before the opening day of the great exhibition. Once opened on Sundays with the approval of the Commission, it would be practically impossible to close it again. When the members came together just before the first of May, they found, on mutually conferring, that apparently a decided majority would vote for reversing the previous action. Then came a time of anxiety for the friends of Sabbath observance.

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

I was so circumstanced at this time as to know much of the movements of both sides. On the day before the vote was to be taken, my old commander and friend, the President of the Commission, told me of the situation as he saw it. He said modestly: "I know, Chaplain, that you have more faith than I have that God gives special help in an emergency in answer to special prayer. So I want you to pray to-night for God's help in this contest." That very utterance showed this leader's faith. It was in itself the prayer, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

As we two were talking together at that time, an earnest and hard-working advocate of Sunday opening, a member of the Commission, came up, and said exultingly: "It's no use. We've got you. You'll find that out to-morrow." And, on the face of it, it looked so.

Before going home, I went to my office, and stated the case to my associate in

## How God Led the Leaders

editorial work, the Rev. Dr. George A. Peltz, a man of faith and prayer, and asked him to pray earnestly that night that God would help in this crisis. And there were godly members of the Commission who were praying the same prayer that night. When, on my knees that evening, I essayed to pray for God's help, my words strangely seemed to come back to me. It was as though God said, "There is no necessity for your prayers. I need not to be entreated of you. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord!" It was a peculiar experience. I have never had anything just like it. Yet with it came the conviction that all was right. I realized that God was working.

Going to my office in the morning, I found my associate there, and, without speaking of what had happened to me, I asked him if he had remembered his promise of prayer. "Yes, indeed," he said, "and there was a singular occurrence as I attempted to pray." Then he told of

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

his experience as almost identical with mine. He was confident, he said, that the Lord had taken this matter in hand.

The Commission met in Parlor C of the Continental Hotel. When I met its president there that day, he said to me: "Chaplain, there is a remarkable change here since last night. They are not so sure as they were of carrying their point. I doubt if they will."

Then I met Mr. George H. Corliss, of Rhode Island, whose mammoth engine was one of the wonders of the exhibition, and the motive-power of all its machinery. He, himself a devout and earnest Christian, was to present the majority report in renewed favor of Sunday closing. We had already talked this matter over together, and had, only the day before, spoken to each other of the evident majority in favor of the proposed change. He now spoke of the remarkable change that had come over several of the members since the day before, and he said he believed that the vote would

## How God Led the Leaders

be different from what had seemed probable twenty-four hours earlier.

After the other business of the day was completed, the two reports on Sunday opening were presented, and discussion began. Mr. Corliss declared that, while he had enjoyed his work for the exhibition, and had fondly hoped for the success of the undertaking, if the exhibition was not to be closed on Sunday nothing was left of his best hopes but ashes, and he could only wish that all he had done for the Centennial was utterly blotted out.

Professor Campbell of Indiana, secretary of the Commission, reminded the Commissioners that state fairs throughout the country were uniformly closed on Sunday. He was sure, moreover, that if the Centennial Exhibition were open on Sunday, the slums of New York and Baltimore, and other cities, would be emptied into Philadelphia on that day, so that this city would be overrun with the viler classes in those communities.

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

In favor of the minority report, claiming that the exhibition should be opened on Sundays, it was said that the laboring classes needed and desired it; that the exhibition itself was not like a place of amusement, but rather like a public library or art gallery, and that its influence would be ennobling on all who attended it; moreover, that anyhow it would pay. In favor of this report there were earnest words from at least one member of the Commission, who was honestly a believer in the Sunday opening on its merits. There was also more or less talk about "bigotry," and "intolerance," and "Puritanism," with the ordinary measure of sentimentalism concerning "the true and the beautiful." Of course, there was no such earnestness in favor of the Sunday opening as there was against it; for there was a lack, on that side, of the moral conviction which gives a man power in advocacy of the right.

General Hawley, of Connecticut, left the

## **How God Led the Leaders**

chair—as President of the Commission—to speak in favor of an observance of the American Sabbath. He insisted that the Commission was already pledged to that course by its previous action and utterances, and that it could not with honor, at this late day, reverse its decision. He believed that no American Congress was ever freighted with weightier responsibilities for the welfare of the American people than was this Commission in now considering the Sunday question. If the doors of the Centennial Exhibition were thrown open on Sunday, one of the safeguards of our nation would be thereby practically broken down. That step would prove the beginning of the end of our American Sabbath observance, and for a century to come men would point to this day's work in justification of a disregard of the traditions and customs of the nation in honoring the Christian Sabbath. Such a responsibility he was not willing to assume. He asked who of the Commission would dare to do so.

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

General Hawley spoke with earnestness in favor of the observance of one day in seven, not merely as a religious duty, but as a necessity of man's physical and moral welfare. He said that if any people were to start in this world all by themselves, without any written or traditional law for their guidance, he believed that they would find, by experiment, that in the long run they could do more work and better in six days of a week than in seven. For the sake of the workingmen inside of the exhibition and outside, he wanted it closed on Sundays.

Colonel Holliday, afterwards Governor Holliday, of Virginia, a gallant Confederate officer, who had lost his right arm in the war, spoke eloquently in support of the views expressed by General Hawley. He asked if those men who talked of "the true and the beautiful" were unwilling to give one day to the contemplation of the true after giving six days to the study of the beautiful. Turning to Mr. Corliss, he said:

## How God Led the Leaders

"That magnificent engine of yours, sir, is indeed a thing of beauty. Each mighty revolution made by it as it puts and keeps in motion for six days in the week the varied machinery which covers more than fifteen acres of space, is *beautiful* beyond a question. But is there any *truth* in it? No, sir! Not unless, on the seventh day, that mighty engine stands silent before Almighty God."

Then came earnest words from Governor McCormick of Arizona. Those who remembered his activity twenty years before in Young Men's Christian Association work in New York City, or who recalled his brilliant address before the Third National Sunday-school Convention at Jayne's Hall, in Philadelphia, in 1859, were not surprised that he also pleaded eloquently for the wise and sacred observance of the Christian Sabbath.

When a friend of Sunday opening sneered at the others as "narrow-minded Puritans," a member of the Commission,

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

whose position had not been known, called out, "I'm on that side, but don't call me a Puritan. In politics, I'm an old line Democrat; in religion, I'm a Universalist. There's not much Puritanism in me."

"Then you don't believe in any hell," said one.

"I believe you'll have a hell here in Philadelphia, if you open those exhibition gates Sundays," was the earnest and startling response.

The feeling had by this time reached a rare degree of intensity for any deliberative body. Members of the Commission who had thought lightly of the whole matter at first, or had been positively in favor of the Sunday opening, realized that a momentous issue was presented, and that they must accept the responsibility of acting for or against the right. There were loud calls of "Question! Question!" by those who were ready to finally record themselves.

At this moment an impressive incident occurred. Mr. Haynes, of Nevada, rose,

## How God Led the Leaders

and said: "Mr. President, before the question is taken, I wish to say a word. I feel like a returned prodigal, and I want to make a confession. More than twenty years ago, I went out from an Eastern home to the Far West. I have lived since then beyond the Rocky Mountains, where we hardly have a Sabbath, and where other than the best moral influences are all about us. But, as I have listened here this afternoon, old memories have come back to me." Here the speaker struggled with strong emotion, and he continued with choking voice: "All these truths were familiar to me long ago, and it seems to me again to-day that I hear them repeated as I used to listen to them from the lips of my sainted mother, as, every evening, I kneeled by her side in prayer. I want to give my vote in favor of observing the Christian Sabbath."

The effect of this remarkable speech was overpowering. It seemed to represent the uplifting of the whole Commission in moral

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

character and tone, and men who would an hour before have voted to open the exhibition for seven days in the week recorded their names heartily in favor of Sunday closing when the vote was called. Even the member of the Commission, who had been counted a representative of the largest monied interests pressing for the change, voted in favor of the report of Mr. Corliss. The vote stood twenty-seven for closing to nine for opening; and so the question was settled—and settled right. God had led the leaders. God be praised for this result!

## XVII

### **Help in the Night Prayed for, and Sent**

It matters not what is the need of a child of God, or when or where he experiences that need. He is privileged to make it known to his Father, and to trust that it will be supplied according to that Father's love and wisdom. Of course, the supply will be through natural means, but ever as the natural is supernaturally controlled. Illustrations of this truth are many and varied, but they all are alike consistent with the principles on which every faith-filled prayer must rest.

Many years ago a distinguished clergyman and college officer gave me an incident illustrating such prayer and its answer in his own family, which profoundly impressed me, and which is worthy of men-

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

tion in this record of experiences. While its first mention to me was many years ago, I have, on the very day that I write this chapter, verified my recollection of the incident by hearing it anew from the person who offered the prayer and received the answer.

My friend's residence was at a little distance from the college, in a somewhat secluded spot, quite apart from the traveled highway. He was temporarily away from his home. His wife and children, with an invalid friend of the wife, were, in a sense, alone in the house. In the dead of night, the wife was started from her sleep by hearing, on the floor below, the iron bolt of the parlor window-shutters thrown back. At once she realized that a burglar, or other intruder, was forcing an entrance. What should she do? How could she secure help?

This was about the time when Professor Huxley had been lecturing and writing on the unwisdom of expecting direct answers

## **Help in the Night Prayed for, and Sent**

to specific prayers. The thought of this flashed on the mind of this startled believer, awakened out of her sleep. And the other thought quickly followed: "God can help me now, and I will pray to him." Then the prayer went up: "Lord, send a policeman to our rescue." The policeman on the beat nearest that residence was accustomed to visit the grounds at certain hours of the night, and therefore the desire was a natural one, on her part, that he should appear just at this juncture.

Just then there was heard the report of a pistol in front of the house. Other shots followed. The startled believer sprang from her bed to look out of her front window. By the bright moonlight she could see signs of confusion in the shrubbery near the house; and then a little boat pushing out on the stream beyond the grounds. Soon a policeman appeared before the house, and called out, saying that burglars had been discovered in the house. He asked to be admitted, so as to see what

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

harm had been done. On being admitted, he told his story.

He had visited the house and grounds on his usual rounds. Finding all right he was returning to the highway when suddenly, as he said, something told him to go back and look again. This must have been about the time that the believer was asking God to send a policeman for her protection. As he neared the house again, he saw a man entering the opened parlor window. The pistol-shots were fired on both sides. The burglar fled to the river, and attempted to escape, but, being wounded, he was disabled, and drowned. He left burglars' tools behind him. On his person were found treasures taken from neighboring houses, as others would have been from this one but for this interruption.

Such an incident might have had no weight with Professor Huxley ; but it confirmed the faith of that praying believer and of others. Is it not good to believe, and to know ?

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